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The PILGRIMAGE
of LIFE
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THE PILGRIMAGE OF LIFE

HELPS FOR THE CHRISTIAN WAYFARER

BY
REV. ALBERT MUNTSCH, S.J.

COLL. CHRISTI REGIS S.J.
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TO
REV. DR. JOSEPH A. POMPENEY
WHO HAS BRIGHTENED LIFE'S PILGRIMAGE FOR MANY
BY HELPING THEM TO FOLLOW
"THE KINDLY LIGHT"

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THE PILGRIMAGE OF LIFE

LIFE'S WARFARE

I. A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

It has sometimes been said that the ignorance among large classes of people in this country, regarding religious truths, is startling. We are living in an age of enlightenment, universal education, and of the Public Library, which now goes out on the highways and into the byways to invite all to come and share its treasures. And though many respond to the call, yet the blindness and want of insight regarding the truths of faith and concerning teachings that must have influence upon man's eternal destiny are not dispelled. Certainly many are unable to give a clear and ready answer to that most important and fundamental question: "Why have you been created?"

The editor of one of our popular, or rather sensational monthlies, took this widespread ignorance

and uncertainty as a basis for a "series of leading articles" in his publication some eight years ago. He put that fundamental question into a slightly different form: "What life means to me?" He then sent it to a score of prominent American writers. He asked them to write a candid reply in answer, with a view of publishing the same in his magazine — the *Cosmopolitan*. Among those who replied were Jack London, John Burroughs, Upton Sinclair, and Alfred Henry Lewis.

It will suffice to give the answer of the last-named author to the question of the editor. "If any one were to ask me how to become a good man, I would say,—become a good animal." This is the bold answer of Mr. Lewis. This is his philosophy of life. This is the sum total of his strivings and ambitions. What a horrible comment on the meaning of our so-called culture and education. In one sentence we are brought back to the darkest days of pagan antiquity, nay, even further back than this,—to the primitive savage still groveling in the abyss and to whom had come as yet neither material culture nor the bright light of revelation. Mr. Lewis is proud of his advice. He says that he gives it after reflection. This sad confession of a sup-

posedly highly-educated man reveals the abysmal ignorance above alluded to, in matters of religion, in truths connected with our eternal destiny as children of God.

How immensely richer are our little children who during their first years at the parochial school are taught the one and only correct answer to the same fundamental question: "Why did God create us?" They give, and fully understand the reply: "To know, love, and serve God, and by so doing to save my immortal soul." This answer contains a true, a sound, a rational and even a working philosophy of life. For the man forgetful of God, of his obligations towards Him, and towards his own soul, stumbles blindly through life. His life has neither purpose nor direction. His existence is bound to be a failure. Unless he come to some firm knowledge as to the purpose of his stay upon earth, he may well be compared to the rudderless ship sent adrift upon the main.

He may know many things in science, in politics, and in history. He may have studied the achievements of great men. But we repeat, unless his own life has some definite object, unless he clearly realizes the one reason why he has been created, all his

strivings and ambitions, and even his very achievements, count for nothing. And yet even reason alone must tell him that he has been created for something which the world can never give. If he looks about him he will notice that everything created serves a definite purpose, and ministers to something higher than itself in the scale of creation. Plant-life, with its marvelous variety, serves the interests and use of the animal-world and of men. The animal-world, with its numerous species, benefits man and answers in many a way to his various needs. Shall man alone be devoid of any higher aim or purpose? It may be said perhaps that this aim and purpose of his existence is to be found in the things of sense and time. Some have tried to find it, for instance, in the conquest of vast riches, in the attainment of worldly prestige, and in sensual indulgence. "These are our gods," say some, "these are things worth striving for, in their attainment consists the purpose of our creation."

Alas! that man should be so blind and short-sighted, as to seek his happiness there, where it cannot be found! For never shall these frivolous pursuits fill the yearning of his heart for happiness. Ever has it been true what Solomon said of old,

concerning the inane and insane craving for things of earth: "Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity." St. Augustine stated the same truth when he said: "Our heart is made for Thee, O God, and it rests not until it finds Thee." In other words, we are made only to know, love and serve God.

Without a higher, a spiritual and a supernatural world-view, without religion, man, even the one most highly gifted, becomes a mere machine. Without Christ, who can change even the most rugged cross of suffering into a privilege enriching life — man will either become a gloomy pessimist, or a victim devoted to morbid broodings on the ills inseparable from life. We need high and exalted ideals to carry us over the, at times, oppressive burdens and afflictions of life. In our weaknesses, temptations and sufferings, in our days filled with sorrows, and during our nights when the lamp of hope burns low, we need strength from on high. But the man who has been taught that he is made to know, love and serve God will more readily ask for this supernatural light and guidance and will more surely obtain them. For his religion teaches him a watchword "Sursum corda!" Lift up your hearts! This man has come to understand the one

fundamental question — the object of his existence. He need not keep his eyes groveling on the ground in the dark hour of trial, but he can lift them up to his home beyond the stars, and receive thence the help needed to continue bravely and manfully life's pilgrimage.

2. HELPS ALONG THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

Holy Scripture and the saints of God frequently compare man's life on earth to a journey. They teach us that we are like pilgrims on the way to a distant goal. This goal is eternity — and to eternity we are hastening onwards every day. We meet many snares and pitfalls on this journey through life. We are often told that "life is a warfare," — a warfare against evil passion, against evil inclination, against temptation and sin. We are warned to be always ready to fight successfully in this spiritual combat.

Now our lot would indeed be sad and deplorable were there no means at hand to help us in the struggle against the manifold forces of evil which we inevitably encounter through the pilgrimage of life. But as children of the Church of Christ we have been amply provided with means to make

this journey through life a success. For we have been provided with the seven sacraments — so many channels of grace, from which we may draw strength and courage and consolation when the spirit flags and the trials and temptations of life weigh heavily upon us. How grateful we ought to be for these spiritual means ever at our command, for these powerful helps and incentives towards leading the Christ-like life.

It is not necessary to recite in detail the manifold effects of the sacraments when worthily received. It will suffice to speak of the marvelous effects produced in the soul by two of them — Penance and the Holy Eucharist. Many a member of the Holy Church sets out with hope upon this journey of life, with a noble resolve to remain true to his Lord during the days of his earthly pilgrimage. But alas! for the weakness of man! Ere he is aware, robber passions attack him. Like the poor traveler going to Jericho he is stripped of all his goods — spiritual goods, the robe of sanctifying grace, and he is left alone in his shame and degradation. Where now shall he turn in his sad plight? Or perhaps, in an evil hour less virtuous companions have given him an outlook into another land, a land

where hang the shadows of death and where bloom the fruits of lasting remorse. Again, he is deprived of priceless spiritual possessions — the state of sanctifying grace and the privilege of fellowship with Christ. Whither shall this wounded, wearied, abandoned soul look for help and remedy? Shall it not be to the Christ, to the Son of the living God, to Him Who came to save, to uplift and to sanctify?

Has not this same Saviour instituted a special sacrament for those who like him have sinned grievously after receiving Baptism? Has he not told His apostles, and through them, told all the priests of His everlasting Church: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain they are retained?" The Council of Trent aptly calls this Sacrament a plank for those who have suffered spiritual shipwreck by losing the grace of God received in the Sacrament of Baptism. But Confession is at the same time one of the best and most practical means for making the journey of life upwards towards our heavenly homeland a success.

Next to Confession as a means and help along life's journey must be mentioned the Holy

Eucharist. It is the food of the strong, the wine that makes virgins, the Bread of Heaven, containing all sweetness. You may remember the beautiful story told in the Book of Kings — a story foretelling the wonderful power of the Holy Eucharist for Christians as a support through life's devious ways. The prophet Elias fled into the desert from the face of the wicked Queen Jezabel, who sought to put him to death. And as the man of God was oppressed by the heat and fatigue of his journey he lay down under a juniper tree and fell asleep. And lo, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, and placed a vessel with water and a hearth-cake by his head, and awoke him and said to him: "Arise, eat, for thou hast yet a long way to go." And Elias arose and partook of that heaven-sent food, and in the strength thereof, he went forward for forty days until he came to the mountain of God, Horeb. This beautiful story has been interpreted by the Fathers as a figure and a wonderful foreshadowing of that real Bread from heaven, which was to be given to the Christian wayfarer in the New Law.

Besides these two powerful helps, there are many others proffered to every member of the Church

of Christ, wherewith to travel forward successfully through the pilgrimage of years. We have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, our beautiful and approved devotions, like those to the Sacred Heart and to the Sacred Passion of our Redeemer. We have our sodalities and our confraternities, membership in which is frequently enriched with special spiritual privileges and with indulgences. Verily, the Catholic cannot complain that his Church, which is rightly called a mother, fails to provide him with weapons wherewith to fight the spiritual combat. Let us examine whether we appreciate this goodness and this foresight of our mother, and whether we make good use of these helps wherewith we may be enabled to remain her faithful children even to the end of life's journey and pilgrimage.

3. THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

Traveling through a country district one frequently comes to a cross-road. Other ways lead off therefrom in different directions. If the traveler is not quite certain of his goal, he will stand for a while at this parting of the ways, not knowing which one to choose.

As we go through life we come occasionally to such a parting of the ways. We are brought face to face with a crisis. We must make a decision. We must choose a certain path, adopt a certain line of conduct. On a wise choice will perhaps depend subsequent peace and happiness. For the choice may have a direct influence on one's whole after life.

It is worth while, then, to reflect before taking the step, before adopting the way you will follow. So much depends on making a good start. Many a youth sets out bravely in the morning of life with high hope to make the best of his opportunities, to be a hero in the strife, to rise to success in some work or profession. But to accomplish all this he needs certain qualities of mind and heart and body. He needs help and strength and the wisdom of books and the experience of years.

All these may come to him if he make the right start, if he choose wisely when he comes to the parting of the ways. Perhaps thus far all went well. Good parents watched over him. Experienced teachers encouraged him. Many prayed for him. He seemed to be a child with heaven's favors upon him. But yet even for him life could

not always remain full of sunshine. At some hour this life must spell warfare, a struggle against forces of evil from within and without.

Perhaps the youth is left to his own resources after leaving the sheltering care of parents and teachers. The time has come when he must make some great decision which requires strength of character. He has now come to the parting of the ways. It is a great hour for him. Shall he listen to the still, small voice of duty and conscience? Shall he act according to the principles taught him by kind parents and wise teachers? Or shall he heed the wild voice which is for the first time speaking within him, and follow that restless desire urging him into new and forbidden paths? Shall he hearken to the siren whispers of evil companions who try to cast a slur upon all he has thus far held in reverence?

Surely a great moment in the life of the youth! We may well pray that such a one's choice will be a good and wise one and that the holy angels will give him strength to conquer his enemies. For if in a moment of weakness, of spiritual cowardliness and faint-heartedness, he prefer the wrong path, perhaps a golden future will be blighted. No

chance then to gain the strength and experience and wisdom required to achieve the better things in life's battle. Hence it is, that we encourage our children in Catholic schools to learn the art of self-conquest. If such a habit be formed in youth it will be easier later on to resist the voice of temptation and to remain faithful to the call of duty. It will be easier to select the right path when facing the parting of the ways.

Yet, even if in a weak moment, he may have entered upon the primrose path that leads to everlasting death, there still remains hope that he may find again the road to his Father's house. For the Lord Christ, who once said to a certain young man: "Young man I say to thee, arise," that same Saviour is ever ready to listen to the prayer for help and pardon. He will be at hand to guide the wanderer back to the fold and to give him new courage and strength to persevere in righteousness. Yet, though it be sweet and consoling to hear the Master's word of pardon, after having offended Him by sin, still more sweet and consoling is it never to have left Him and never to have listened to His enemies. Hence we may well pray that when some loved one arrives at the parting of the ways, there

may come to him the light and the fixed determination to take the better path, which will lead him upward, onward and forward to his God and Saviour.

4. THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN SUFFERING

The problem of human suffering has at all times engaged the thoughts and attention of men. For it does seem strange that the sorrows and afflictions of many a human life should far outweigh its joys and hours of gladness. Holy Scripture rightly compares man's existence to a warfare, and in the liturgical language of the Church, we speak of man's life as a journey through a vale of tears. Each one's own individual experience forces the bitter truth upon him that joy is soon followed by sorrow, and that heart-ache speedily followeth after the brief spell of delight.

The un-Christian philosophy of our day has taken up the question "why so much poverty and pain and distress among the children of men?" And it must confess that it knows not their meaning and value, nor can it suggest any motive of hope and encouragement to the man whom calamity seems to have marked out for its special victim.

The adherents of that modern school of thought which proudly boasts that it has outgrown the faith and doctrine of Christianity, are almost forced to look upon suffering and misery as nothing but obstacles to progress and to the universal reign of culture.

And why is it that there are so many and such deplorable failures in a matter which concerns our deepest interests here below and is intimately bound up with our eternal destiny in the life to come? The reason of the many failures lies in this, that the solution of the problem demands the light of faith. That problem is closely related to the end and aim of man's existence on earth. And man is destined for a supernatural end, for God, for His love and eternal possession. We are in fact pilgrims, wayfarers to our true home and fatherland. Alas! that the way to that eternal life lies through a vale of tears and bitterness. It was not intended so originally by the Eternal Father. For life, which by Him was destined to be all gladness and sunshine, has through the fall of man been blighted by misery. We are now a fallen race. Sin has entered into the world. With sin came sorrow and pain and suffering and — death.

Yet we are not cast out into the utter darkness. A Redeemer came to open the pathway to eternal life, to clear the way, to brush aside the obstacles on our onward march to the heavenly Jerusalem. It was His immeasurable love for us that caused Him to come. Love prompted Him to leave the eternal mansions and to walk pilgrim-like in the flesh for the space of thirty-three years, working out a painful human life, like the humblest and poorest of the children of men. He purchased for us the right to be called again children of God. He was the Son of God and He alone could make atonement for the sins of men. For so the infinite justice of God the Father—a justice which cannot be measured by human standards—demanded. That vicarious atonement was necessary. For the offense was sin—and the malice of sin we never can fathom. It is infinite in so far as it offends an infinite God. And only an infinite person, distinct from the outraged majesty of God the Eternal Father, could take up the work of expiation.

And this vision gives unto us the key to the problem of human suffering. For Christ indeed stands forth as the Saviour, the Ransomer, the Life-giver, the Redeemer of men. But say not that all

has been accomplished. For every one of us the right has indeed been secured of having access to the Father on account of the infinite merits of the passion and crucifixion of the Divine Son. But we, too, must walk the Way of the Cross — the royal road that leads to Calvary. For Christ is not only our Saviour, but He is also our King and Lord. He desires our service. His way must be our way. Where the King and Master trod, there too must go the children, His subjects. We are His children and subjects. And know you not that therefore man's life upon earth is a warfare — that therefore through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of heaven, and that therefore every child of Adam, that would not forfeit the eternal inheritance placed by Jesus Christ within the reach of all, must take up the cross — the burdens and afflictions of life — and follow Him up, up the steep heights of Calvary? He went before us and drank the bitter chalice which His Father had prepared for Him. And it is not for us to seek a smooth and easy path to eternal life, when the redeeming work of Christ, our King, was wrought in the valley of toil and tears. Thus it becomes plain why sorrow and sadness accompany us also on the journey

of life. For we must become like unto the Master to enter into His glory.

From the Cross of Christ there come to us bright and consoling rays which illumine the dark problem of human woe and suffering. The sufferings of our Divine Lord now appear as a necessary element in the economy of our Redemption. Now His passion and agony stand forth not only as a vehicle of grace unto us, but as a great gift of divine love. Christ, the Crucified, has shown us that for sinful man the glory and privilege of being called children of God has been purchased by the shame and ignominy of the Cross. Christ, the Crucified, offers us the solution of the problem of human suffering. By His passion and death He has achieved for us the greatest triumph. By that same passion and agony he wrought out the greatest work ever given man to accomplish — the salvation of the race.

When dread disease overtakes us, when burning pain and torture rack our limbs, when the hour has come for us to say a last farewell to our loved ones and to take leave of the things of earth — then we take our crucifix into our trembling hands, and kissing it reverently, pray for strength and perseverance. For we know that only from the Cross can

come light in darkness, only from it can stream hope and uplift in that last dread crisis. The Cross of Christ and the dreadful sufferings which it symbolizes — these give unto the Christian the sweet assurance of victory in that last great hour. But this sign of salvation also offers him the solution of one of the most puzzling of world problems — the problem of human suffering.

5. THE TRIUMPH OF FAILURE

We often read of the complete antithesis that exists between the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ. As Christians, we are told to hate the world and to beware of its snares and deceitful maxims. We need not be afraid to follow our Lord's advice to hate the world and its abominations. He Himself said: "I pray not for the world." The world is a society diametrically opposed to the spirit and purpose of the great spiritual organization, founded to save souls — the Catholic Church.

As a consequence of this antagonism between the two organizations, there is also a complete antithesis in the judgments, which they respectively pass on questions and principles of utmost importance to

man. When, for instance, a man who has spent his whole life in poverty and suffering comes to die, the world, that is, people in general, will say that such a man's life was a failure. And when to the last days of that man there were added great death-bed sufferings, when he was carried out to a lone grave — the world will say that such a life was even a greater failure. But mark well, this is the judgment of a hard and selfish world, which measures success by gross material standards.

For is it true that a life of pain and suffering patiently borne, a life of poverty passed in the friendship of God, but devoid of all the pleasures and comforts of this world, is really a failure? We must answer in the negative if we base our opinions on the words of our Divine Lord. He tells us of the poor man Lazarus, who received not even the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and yet, when he came to die, was borne by angels to the home of eternal peace and happiness. And the rich man, who was clad in fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, the hard-hearted one, when he too came to die, he was buried in hell. Therefore, is it true that a life of affliction and

misery, borne with resignation and conformity to God's will, is a failure?

Judged from the standpoint of the world our Divine Lord's career was evidently a complete failure. For it was a life of humility, of toil and of dire poverty. He had some obscure friends, few of whom He could trust entirely, and one of whom sold Him to His enemies. Hence when these enemies had done Him to death and had consigned Him to the tomb, they rejoiced mightily. For they looked upon that man as inimical to their interests, and now they were glad, because, apparently, His life had closed with the ignominy of the cross. And yet on the third day that same Jesus, whose life they had loudly proclaimed a failure, by His own might rose from the tomb, and stood forth as victor, crowned with undying glory.

The lives of those who imitate Christ most closely, that is, the lives of the saints, are often looked upon as failures by a deluded world. And from the narrow, worldly point of view we may grant that they are failures. Thus the magnanimous St. Paul, enduring hardships and privations for the Master he once persecuted, may have seemed

a simpleton to the wise men of Greece and Rome. And yet to-day, the name of Paul shines forth brightly as an heroic apostle of righteousness unto the nations, and as the one who brought unto them the knowledge and the love of the Lord Jesus. Many of the saints died after horrid tortures for the sake of their Divine Master. We may mention a St. Agnes and a St. Cecilia. The world pitied them for their folly in giving up their rich prospects, their homes, the pleasures of life. And yet, now these two names loom up brightly on the roll of illustrious heroines. St. Athanasius persecuted by the world, Francis Xavier penetrating to an unknown people, Peter Claver slaving for the black outcast of Cartagena, Vincent de Paul, sacrificing his health that others might live, Brébeuf and Lallemant dying amid flames for the tribes of the Canadian forest, Father Damien breathing out his soul amidst the lepers of Molokai, Joan of Arc suffering at the stake, Soeur Thérèse, the Little Flower of Jesus, leading a quiet and retired life when she might have shone in society — the lives of these and of countless other devoted men and women may have seemed a failure to a blind and sinful world, for these lives were all inspired by “the folly of the cross.” And the cross

means everything that the world flees from. But are not all these great saints esteemed as heroes of humanity, has not the world been made better for their living and are they not honored to-day by the noblest of our race? The saints are great, not only because churches and towns and institutions have been named in their honor, not only because they did great things for the welfare of the human brotherhood, but above all, because they led the saintly life—because they were heroes in the strife for good and for virtue, heroes in the contest against evil and sin and unrighteousness of every kind. Does not the glory which to-day is theirs answer the question, whether the virtuous life, though ending in obscurity and even in martyrdom, is a failure?

6. THE PLANK AFTER SHIPWRECK

The Council of Trent refers to the Sacrament of Penance as a plank to be seized upon by the soul when it has suffered shipwreck by mortal sin. Mortal sin deals death to the soul and makes it an object of disgust in the sight of God. The soul can no longer merit for Heaven while it is in the state of grievous sin. By losing sanctifying grace

it has lost its right to Heaven, its privilege to rejoice in the liberty of the children of God. The soul is useless, dead, and the slender thread of life alone keeps it from well-merited, eternal doom.

Yet there is hope for that stricken soul even when the night of spiritual death has seized upon it. There is a sacrament of pardon, of forgiveness, of reconciliation. "I will not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live." A plank is ready at hand to save the soul from everlasting woe. This plank is provided by a sincere and contrite confession of the sin which has plunged the soul in misery.

Why should we not regard Confession as such a help and comfort when ugly sin has stolen into the soul and robbed us of peace, of gladness and the grace of God! Far from us the thought that Confession is intended to be a torture, a rack, a grievous burden! Not so; it is a plank sent to you because you have had the misfortune to suffer spiritual shipwreck and to endanger the salvation of your precious soul. That soul is endowed with immortality. But the gift of immortality is turned into a curse unspeakable if your immortal life be not spent with God in the Eternal City. To enable

you to escape the dreadful doom of the sinner in the land of everlasting woe, there has been prepared for you, instituted for you, this Sacrament of Penance, offering you once more the gift of immortal life in the City of God.

Confession, then, is indeed a rescue to those of us who have gone astray, who have been assailed by robber passions on the pilgrimage of life, and been despoiled by them of the robe of sanctifying grace. How happy our lot when compared with that of those who are unaware of the grace and saving power of this great sacrament for the storm-tossed soul? Peace of mind should result from the blessed thought that we have always seized bravely upon this plank after we have had the appalling misfortune to lose sight of God for awhile by the commission of dread mortal sin. The frequent use of this holy means of confession will help us to beat down the enemies that assail us, and to go forward steadily upon the path that leads to the possession of the crown of justice.

7. THE CALL OF CHRIST

In his well-known book called the "Spiritual Exercises," St. Ignatius of Loyola has a fine medita-

tion called the "Kingdom of Christ," or the "Call of Christ." It presents a great leader who is about to undertake an important work, a work not for his own glory, but for the glory of the Most High God. In following out this work he needs many loyal and devoted helpers. So he issues a call for volunteers. Those who accept the invitation are to undergo no hardship and no dangers which the captain and leader himself is not willing to encounter.

It has been said, and no doubt with much truth, that this meditation of the great saint has inspired many generous souls to unselfish service in the cause of God, the extension of His kingdom and the salvation of immortal souls. For Christ, indeed, has issued such a call. He desires all men to be members of His Church, His Kingdom, His spiritual army. His enemies, and the enemies who thwart the divine mission which His Father has laid upon Him, are legion. Christ wants all earnest-minded souls to take part in this glorious work of combating the enemies of His Father, of His Holy Kingdom.

Christ Himself shows us what response we are to make to His call. For when He was twelve years of age, He went up to Jerusalem with His parents.

When He had been found in the temple, after three days' separation from Mary and Joseph, He said to them, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" Father Coleridge, S. J., who has given us many beautiful studies on the Life of Christ, rightly says that these first recorded words of the God-man have prompted many persons to give up worldly ambitions and to follow the lowly Christ in that life which He Himself led — a life of toil and abnegation for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, for the extension of His kingdom and in warfare against those enemies that beset the soul's salvation.

Though it is not given to all to follow Christ in the religious life,—the life of poverty, chastity and obedience,—yet all may listen to, and follow in some way, His holy call. For all may take part in that glorious campaign of extending the Kingdom of the Lord, of warring against our spiritual enemies, of combating religious error and of building up His reign first in our own hearts, and then, by the force of good example, in the hearts of our fellow men.

But there are also more practical ways in which the children of the Church can follow the call of

Christ. This is rightly called the age of the Catholic lay apostle. We need the Catholic laymen. We need him in our charitable, our educational, our social reform work. Many ways have been pointed out of late in which the Catholic laymen can serve his Church and help in the work she must accomplish. Can he not engage in some of this work? Can he not be of some practical assistance in a parish activity? There are, for instance, the many Church societies, with well-defined object. They either further some charitable undertaking, or foster a useful devotion or promote some laudable cause making for the good of the parish and all its people. Would it not be worth while to join your forces with these agencies of good?

Some are unwilling to join these Church organizations. They say they are doing quite enough by attending to their duties as Catholics, by going to Mass on Sunday and contributing to the support of the Church. This is quite true. They are doing enough to remain in the Church and to receive its manifold graces and blessings. But what about the call of Christ? Is He not calling you to something better, perhaps to something which requires a little

sacrifice? But He will ask you to do nothing unless He has first given you the example. If He calls you to sacrifice and suffering He has shown you the way. In the meditation referred to, the great leader tells his followers that the hardships of the loyal liegemen will likewise be his own. Is not this true of Christ, who asks all of us to follow Him who is the way, the truth and the life?

But to return to our Catholic layman. We grant that he does something by being a good church member. Yet we know that to-day the Church has many enemies to combat. To oppose them successfully there is need of a united Catholic laity, fighting and giving good example under a united clergy and episcopate and loyally devoted to the common spiritual father and guide of all — Christ's representative in the Chair of Peter. But Catholic union implies a society, a confraternity or a sodality which gathers its members in a worthy cause and instructs and inspires them in the living up to high Catholic ideals. Their cause as members of such societies will always be more or less connected with God's glory, with the extension and defense of the true faith and with the salvation of souls. Now

by helping in any of these noble works you are listening to the call of Christ.

Now, too, is the time when invitations are going out to join in the laymen's retreat movement. Perhaps the call of Christ is very definite for you this summer. It is a very great grace to make one of these "retreats" alone with your God. In listening to this particular call you will learn many things about the soul's life, you will be encouraged and strengthened to do your share as a lay-apostle in these days when we need the laymen so much.

But all of us can give heed to this call of the great leader in the meditation on the "Call of Christ." We need not go forth over unknown seas and into strange lands to preach the name of Christ. We follow Him and listen to the call when we conquer the enemies within — evil inclinations and temptations to sin. This is a very practical way of working for His kingdom. Let us be assured that no matter what our particular duties be, or where our work lies — if we be faithful to every inspiration of grace and do all in our power to serve Him, if we, in a word, identify our interests with His, we hearken to the benign call, become workers in His army and shall share in the blessed reward.

8. THE CALL TO SERVICE

In the first chapter of the Prophecy of Jeremias, the prophet tells us how "the word of the Lord" came to him, calling him to service. The Lord spoke to him in a vision, saying how He had sanctified him before birth, and how he was to become a teacher unto the nations. But Jeremias said: "Lord God; behold I cannot speak, for I am a child." The Lord wished him to do noble work in His cause and to prepare the way for the advent of the Messiah. He promised him furthermore that when enemies would rise to fight against him, they would not prevail—"for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee." And yet the great priest of the Old Law was afraid.

Like the prophet of old, our men of to-day, especially our young men in colleges and in public life, in the workshops and in the offices, at the club and in the factories, are occasionally called upon to testify to the Lord. They are to be witnesses to His Name. Nay more, it may at times be their bounden duty to testify to the faith that is in them and to battle for the Lord. For in these days when the Church is so much attacked by open and by

hidden enemies, may there not arise an occasion when they are to stand forth as soldiers of the Lord Christ, and when the sacramental grace received in Holy Confirmation is to enable them to do some definite work for God's glory and the honor of His Church?

Shall they in that hour plead inefficiency? Shall they excuse themselves by alleging the difficulty of the task? Shall they shift the burden to other shoulders, saying that they are not prepared for the emergency? Alas, for the cowardice of men! We need men to-day, men who can stand foursquare to every wind of opposing doctrine. The Catholic Church needs such noble champions to-day. She calls aloud for them in this the day of her tribulation. Her fair name is befouled by vile and cowardly enemies. Her sacred practices are held up to the scorn of an ignorant rabble. Her priests and consecrated virgins are publicly insulted and the tongue of calumny is ever leveled against them. Where then are her defenders?

It is useless to allege "I am a child." Do at least what you can. If you are not in a position to answer publicly the base charges, if you are not gifted with voice and knowledge to defend your

faith and Church in the open assembly, you can do something which is perhaps just as excellent. You can give testimony to the holiness of your Church and to the higher requirements demanded of her children, by your exemplary Christian life. In any event, do not use the excuse of the prophet, "I am a child." For surely the Lord will answer you, "Do not say I am a child." You have received the grace and spiritual power of Confirmation. You have been made strong with the chrism of salvation. Hence remember in the hour of conflict what is expected of you as the soldier of the Lord your God.

Do you wish to know how to answer this call to service in a very practical way? All about you in the shops and offices, on the streets, in the clubs, on the highways and byways, you meet the evil-tongued blasphemer, and him whose words are filth and corruption. A stream of polluted conversation rises up to high heaven and calls down the anger of an All-holy God. Catholic young men, what is your duty in this distressing situation? Scandal is being given almost every moment, and perhaps souls, which were once glad in the grace of God, are being ruined eternally. Are you to stand idly

by? Worse still, are you to join forces with these spirits of evil, with these despoilers of innocence? Foul language debases minds, corrupts hearts, destroys souls. What a magnificent opportunity you have to lend a helping hand to a tempted brother, to speak a strong, manly word of needed reproof and to encourage those who are struggling against these evil forces hourly besetting them. This is one way in which you may be a hero in the strife, a hero for righteousness, for your God and for your Church.

9. "WEARING THE WHITE FLOWER OF A
BLAMELESS LIFE"

In the Dedication of "The Idyls of the King," Tennyson, summing up the virtues of Prince Albert, says that he was distinguished above all for "wearing the white flower of a blameless life." The prince was "modest, kindly, all-accomplished, wise." Yet it was chiefly the moral excellence of his life that won for him the admiration of his people.

But not only those who pass their days "in that fierce light which beats upon a throne" are entitled to grateful recognition for giving unto others the

high example of a blameless life. Not only those who occupy the seats of the mighty, deserve praise for keeping down the base in man and for striving upward with strong resolve. The lowly worker who gives cheer and inspiration to a neighbor in the battle of life by kind word, by courageous conduct, and by the value he sets on keeping his soul free from the stain of grosser sin — such a one is likewise a hero in the strife. He, too, deserves well of his fellow-men for “wearing the white flower of a blameless life.”

This much-quoted line from the Poet-laureate shows that it is not dazzling achievement in statecraft or warfare that lends renown to the character of those who rule others. These accomplishments pass away and may even leave a train of grim evils in their wake. Posterity is keen in deciding a ruler's claim to grateful recognition. It will look for something of real and lasting value in his career. It will remember his virtues and his vices. Happy the sovereign if the former outweigh the latter in the shrewd opinion of the multitude! For then will he be held in loving remembrance by the best and noblest, because he wore “the white flower of a blameless life.”

IO. WORK, NOT WORRY

“Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow” is the command laid upon us all since Adam plunged the whole race into misery by the commission of sin. From this law of work no one is to be exempt. We must all do our appointed task and bear our burdens to the end of our days. Workless days and years without trial and toil are promised to no one in this vale of tears.

We need not believe, however, that work whether it be of hand or mind, must be accompanied by worry and constant fret and anxiety. Worry about work and performance of daily duty may, in fact, vitiate the work and even deprive it of merit in the sight of God. We are told to work, but there is no injunction to worry. Restlessness and disturbance of soul are nowhere in Holy Scripture laid upon us as a duty. In fact, we are told to possess our souls in peace. Wretchedness and agony of mind are often said in Holy Writ to be the portion of the sinner, but not of the one who faithfully works at his appointed task.

We see here a gentle invitation to work in peace of soul and even to find joy in work. Moses lead-

ing the chosen people out of the land of Egypt, Isaias and Jeremias convincing them of their sins and infidelity, Paul preaching to the crowds gathered at the pagan shrines, Jesus at the carpenter's bench in Nazareth — they all worked and strove in different ways — but worry and fret and despondency were not necessary accompaniments of the Divine Will which each one obeyed in his own manner.

How often we allow useless worry and blighting thoughts of despondency to creep into our minds and cripple or vitiate our endeavors! What advantage is there in giving way to discouragement when it neither lifts our burden an inch, nor advances our work even one little bit towards completion. Worry takes the keen edge from the enjoyment which the normal person should find in work. For work, even work "in the sweat of one's brow," conduces to joy and satisfaction. The mandate given in Paradise does not forbid man to find comfort and peace in working either for one's self or for others.

Work with a "pure intention" and your work will meet with a two-fold prize: among men and in Heaven. The pictures representing Christ at the

carpenter's bench depict Him with a joyful, serene countenance. Christ understood the dignity of manual labor. Work from a sense of duty, work because this is the law of life and progress, work with a good motive and with peace of mind — and the ugly demon worry will find no abode with you.

II. "WORK AND PRAY"

"Work and pray"—is a maxim whose faithful observance has filled many a life with happiness, and rewarded it with a crown of glory celestial. It is a saying which guided the members of the monastic orders, who did so much for the spiritual and social welfare of European nations ever since the Middle Ages. Had they not been devoted to this twofold exercise, they would not have become such mighty forces for the spread of Christian culture. But it was because the hands that were devoted to rugged toil were frequently lifted up in prayer, that "God gave the increase," and blessed the efforts of the monks causing fruit a hundred-fold to spring from the labors of the religious brotherhoods.

It is true that now-a-days we hear a good deal about the value of work. Long before an Ameri-

can ex-President had sung the praises of the "Strenuous Life," Carlyle had written down in memorable words, the stern duty of every man to work to the best of his ability. "Blessed is the man who has found his work; let him ask no greater blessing."

But there is no doubt that work joined with prayer, or work lifted up to a higher sphere by the "good intention," will have more value before God. "Prayerful" work never missed its reward. Who has not heard of the famous Indian Reductions of Paraguay? The story has often been told how the savages had been gradually weaned from their wild life in the forest and mountains, and brought to the settled life of the plains and the pampas by the good example of their spiritual guides, who taught them to join work and prayer. The savages now began to lay out fields and orchards. Every hour had its appointed task, for both young and old. The bell never failed to ring for prayer after the day's work. It also rang at intervals during the day's toil. Who will say that this exercise of hand and heart was misplaced? Who will deny that it was richly blessed? The "Reductions" were a model community, solidly established in social peace and industrial prosperity. But then envy, and

hatred of the name of God, began their devastating work. The enemies of Christ broke in upon this happy domain and rudely swept away the fruit of toil and prayer.

“Work and pray”—both exercises are equally good, equally noble and important. But when the limbs refuse to respond as actively as in the days of youth to the call of duty, when the fatigue of old age has set in, and the weakening of bodily forces has begun—even then, you may work and pray. For prayer welling up from a simple heart, fervent and persevering prayer, is work; it is work for the common good, for God’s Church, for all the faithful, for all mankind.

“Ora et labora”—write these words before you and heed their gentle message. For they are a message coming to you from the great ones of the Heavenly City. It comes to you from the sainted men and women who toiled through life’s fitful fever, and from those who achieved the blessed reward of days well-spent for God and man.

12. WE ARE CREATURES OF GOD

One of the great mistakes in the religious life of to-day is that men forget the fact that they are

creatures — and that, as creatures, they owe obedience to God, their sovereign master. The modern world loves to speak of “emancipation,” and refers with pity to the men of mediæval days, who were “held in subjection to authority” and who slavishly obeyed “the mandates of a tyrannic church.” But frequently this glorious word “emancipation” thinly disguises a riotous and sinful life, lived according to the suggestion of man’s lower nature which has violently broken with the law of God and risen in rebellion against His authority. The cry “emancipation” is merely an artificial covering for their sinful lives and for their shameful abandonment to another but more vicious subjection, a subjection to their lower nature and their sensuous inclinations.

Every violent uprising against the law of God is diametrically opposed to all the teachings of the Gospel. It is true that the sin of pride and the rebellion of man against God go back to the beginning of time. For by pride the angels fell, and lost their privilege as children of God. Yet it is especially in our own time that men, and women too, have tried to emancipate themselves both from the law of God and from the voice of conscience.

The rebellious challenge “non serviam”—I will not serve—has been uttered especially in our own times by misguided souls, who have risen in rebellion against God and His Divine Son, against the Church of Christ, against the moral law which has the sanction of the ages.

The false and pernicious doctrine that we are self-sufficient in all things, that we need not the help of grace, that we have become emancipated from obedience to the unseen Creator has been preached even by so-called “religious” leaders. But their principles and their message lead to moral destruction and ruin and to the ultimate degradation of society. The proud philosophers and free-thinkers who lived prior to the French Revolution proclaimed the theory of the self-sufficiency of man and they waged a relentless war upon Christ and His Church. “Crush the Church”—was their hideous war-cry. And as a direct result of the abominable teaching that man is autonomous and all-sufficient in the regulation of his moral life, that he need acknowledge no God, and that humility is a virtue only for children and the unenlightened, one of the fairest countries of Europe was deluged

with the blood of some of her noblest sons and daughters.

The cry "We are emancipated from God," "we cast to the winds any law and authority not springing from ourselves," is likewise heard in the camp of those "social reformers" who are trying to "uplift" man, as they say, and to bring about a nobler and happier era, without insisting on a renovation of the life of the soul. People might well give heed to the warning frequently uttered by the Rev. Doctor H. C. Potter, the late Protestant Episcopal Bishop of New York, who consistently held that the beginning of all social progress must be in the soul of the individual, and hence that the world can become better, only as individuals consent to become better.

In spite of these warnings, however, certain men have been trying "reform" without God, for nearly a century. As a consequence, mankind is as far as ever from the blessed goal of universal peace and good will, and mutual forbearance and charity. How can these unfortunate reformers elevate the unworthy and the sinful and the degraded, how can they raise to a higher plane the ideas and aspira-

tions of moral lepers and perverts by telling them that they need not mind the voice of conscience, that they need obey neither Christ nor His law, neither His Church nor any so-called ministers who preach in His name? Does not history itself teach us that moral force comes from above, and that man left to himself, is soon degraded and loses the last vestige of those virtues which lift him above the brute creation?

The doctrine that man is free from obligation to the unseen Deity is preached in much of the sensational literature of to-day. But, unfortunately, sometimes men of great literary talent have likewise belittled the fact that all men are creatures of God, that they are made in His image, that to Him alone they owe obedience and that to Him they will be responsible for the conduct of their lives.

It is much to be deplored by all right-minded men that in an age which stands in sore need of greater respect for authority, such false teachers and preachers and writers foment discord and dissatisfaction. Their theory — "every man a law to himself — no need of subjection to authority, human or divine" must produce pernicious results. One of our popular magazine writers, Walter Lipp-

man, of New York, thinks that the appeal to the higher law or to authority is out of date. He seems to be certain of only one thing — that the principle of authority can never be restored and that the Rock of ages has been removed from man's past.

It is not necessary to point out the effects of these false teachings and unsound doctrines. They are apparent everywhere. A painful fact, which the press of the country has been bringing home to us with great insistence, is the deplorable increase of crime during the last few years. It can be shown that a great deal of the social discontent, a great deal even of this crime and breaking of laws, may be traced to those teachings which proclaim to our people that they are a law to themselves, and that they are not responsible for their every act to God their Creator.

13. THE LESSON OF THE ROOD

One of the first pious practices taught the Catholic child is "making the sign of the cross." The good Christian mother takes infinite pains to train the baby hands to form the symbol of salvation and to teach the baby lips how to utter with

becoming reverence the accompanying invocation to the Holy Trinity. And the mother rejoices when after all these pains the infant can succeed in making unaided that holy sign which is to become to him a sweet symbol and a strong protection in after years.

And it is proper that parental care should be devoted to training the children in the making of this blessed sign, and to teaching them its deep significance. Symbols and ceremonies play an important part in our Catholic worship — much more among us than among the sects separated from the unity of the Church of Christ. But it is meet and just that these ceremonies and rites and rubrics — all of which are full of deep meaning and mystic content — should accompany our praise and service and worship of the Most High. For in the Old Law God Himself commanded such rites, and the prophets and law-givers insisted on their observance. It is true that the Old Law possessed a multitude of minute liturgical rules and observances which were abolished in the New Dispensation. In the New Law sanctification was to be purchased, not so much by the faithful observance of liturgies as by a devout disposition of the heart, coöperation

with the grace of Christ, and by the proper reception of the Sacraments. But yet no one dare say that exterior rites and ceremonies are of no avail in the interior and spiritual life. For they are in fact, to those who observe them rightly, to those who understand them thoroughly and practice them in a spirit of reverence, helps to greater sanctity.

All this is especially true of the rood — the sweet symbol of salvation, the Cross sanctified and ennobled forevermore by the death of the world's Redeemer. How much does the Cross not mean to all Christians? The Cross has inspired some of the mediaeval singers to compose hymns which are still a cherished possession of the Church and whose triumphant strains still accompany our worship. "O Crux, Ave, Spes Unica" is the joyful and reverent greeting of one of these mediaeval singers — "Hail, Cross, our only hope!" And is it not true? Has not the Salvation of the world hung on the Cross? Does not the Church say of the Cross: "In quo salus mundi pependit" — "On which hung the Salvation of the world"?

The lesson of the rood, the Cross of Christ! Who can adequately tell what it means for the Christian soul in this valley of tears? What would

those in distress do without the lesson of the Cross of Christ? How explain the problem of human suffering without the rood of Golgotha? How give hope to the sinner, consolation to the afflicted, courage to the dying, without the Crucifix? What sign or symbol can ever replace that blessed Cross, which now is a guide to the Christian way-farer through the weariness of his earthly pilgrimage upwards to the heavenly city? The Cross indeed was once a sign of shame and contempt. On it were nailed in the pagan times great malefactors. But the Christ, the Son of the Living God, has ennobled that sign of ignominy. His name lends hope and strength and joy and heavenly comfort to what was in heathen days the synonym of wretchedness and contempt. It has become to the devout Christian soul the glorious symbol of hope, of triumph, of victory over sin and the powers of darkness.

It is in this symbol that every soul is first incorporated into the Church, the mystic body of Christ. For we are baptized with the Sign of the Cross — in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. The chrism of salvation is placed on the forehead in Confirmation under the sign of

the Cross. In the great tribunal of reconciliation with God, His minister imparts the forgiveness by forming over the penitent the sign of salvation, while speaking at the same time the words of absolution. The Bread of Life is broken to the Christian soul after the priest has made with it the sign of the Cross.

We may draw a few practical lessons from the fact that the blessed cross holds such a distinguished place in our worship. Do we honor that sacred symbol? Have we a picture of the Cross of Christ, or a Crucifix in our homes? Are we ashamed to form that holy symbol when according to pious custom it is reverently made? The Cross is the badge of the Christian soldier. And should we then not reverence it and hold it in the highest honor? The Crucifix was, as some saints tell us, their "chief book." That is, it was to them a compendium of the Christian's life on earth. For is it not our main duty to imitate Christ—by following Him along the royal way of the Cross? That way alone leads to victory. Hence St. Francis Xavier wished to die poor and forsaken for the sake of his master—yet one possession he wanted to take with him as he went forward to meet

his Saviour face to face. It was the Crucifix which spoke to him of Christ who had redeemed his soul from sin. With the Cross before us during the days of our earthly pilgrimage, with our eyes fixed on the holy rood during our last moments, we, too, may go forward confidently to meet our Redeemer, our Saviour, Who purchased for us salvation on the Cross.

II. OUR SPIRITUAL ARMOR

14. THE CATECHISM

We are living in an age of compendiums, hand-books, and "short cuts" to learning. Information in various spheres of science, art, literature and philosophy is compressed into manuals for the handy use of the seeker after knowledge.

Such books assuredly serve a useful purpose. They save much time and readily bring to the grasp of the inquirer the conclusions of authorities in the world of scholarship.

But have you ever called to mind that every child in our Catholic schools is presented with a convenient summary of knowledge and conclusions on questions of the greatest moment to every human being? This book is the Catechism. It is one of the most useful compendiums of wisdom and true enlightenment. For it informs the mind on eternal things, it contains statements and declarations about truths which never pass away, it propounds doctrines as lasting as the adamantine hills.

The Catholic child does not merely con and "learn by heart" the answers in the Catechism. The book is thoroughly explained in the class-room. Its terms and expressions, some of which are seldom used in ordinary speech, are defined. Questions concerning the doctrine set forth and the truths proposed are answered by the teacher. The Catechism is taken up frequently during the week, for experience has shown that this precious book, if well thumbed and studied during school days, will prove a precious help and a strong support in after life. It will be a guide when doubts arise, when temptation beats upon the young heart, when the whispers of evil companions strive to turn the youth into the paths leading down to the shadows of death.

But what is most wonderful about this book is the solidity of its teaching, the fact that its conclusions are accepted by the millions, and that it is the result of the keenest speculations on the things of God, on Faith, on Religion, on the higher and eternal life, on virtue and the necessity of clean and upright living. The Catechism is published in many languages, it is constructed on many plans and it may develop its lessons according to various principles. But ever and always it is the same grand

universal and unshakable body of teaching taught by the Church, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. What an inspiring thought this is, in an age so changing and changeable as ours, when ethical theories are constructed to-day to be rejected to-morrow, when so-called teachers of the higher life spend their efforts in striking at the law of God, and in "blasting at the rock of ages!"

The Catechism is not only a book of supreme knowledge for young and old, for rich and poor, for saint and sinner. It is a book of power. It contains the strongest and most convincing appeal for righteousness. It presents this proof not in the wild shrieking fashion of the half-crazed gospeler, but in the calm light of reason, supported by the utterances of Divine Wisdom.

"Literature of power," says De Quincey, "never dies." The Catechism, as a book of Christian doctrine, as a compend of Christian faith and morality, and as a book of power, will never become out of date. It will never be replaced by a newer, better and simpler book of inspiration and spiritual uplift. As long as the world lasts, the sad old fashion of sin and sorrow, of unbelief and slimy temptation will be with us, and so long, too, will the

Catechism bear a needed message of strength and hope to the wanderer through life's pilgrimage.

15. THE VALUE OF PRAYER

We do not recall as often as we should that in fervent and persevering prayer we have a potent means of obtaining necessary graces. We are apt to lead purely natural lives and to overlook the fact that to secure help in troubles of the soul we need not so much the courage and strength that come from creatures, but rather the assistance of Divine Grace. But, as just said, this is most readily secured by prayer.

The words in St. Matthew, "Seek and you shall find," and "all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive," are certainly very explicit. They need no long explanation. Our Lord simply says "ask" and faith tells us we shall "receive."

We must, of course, bear in mind that through want of foresight, or because we are blinded by passion or self-interest, or impelled by unworthy motives, we may pray for something that is not best for our soul's welfare. God has not promised to hear such a petition. Indeed, it would not be con-

sistent with His Providence and Wisdom to do so.

Our Lord has given us the example of persevering prayer. St. Matthew tells us "He went up into a mountain alone to pray, and when it was evening, He was there alone." St. Luke adds, "He passed the whole night in the prayer of God." The private and public life of the Saviour was above all a life of prayer.

It is, no doubt, in imitation of this example of the Son of God that the Saints were devoted to prayer. They have left us some most consoling words concerning the power of humble prayer. Without frequent recourse to this ready weapon they would not have persevered in God's grace and friendship. Perseverance in prayer meant for them perseverance in the state of sanctifying grace and the securing of the crown of everlasting life.

St. Alphonsus Ligouri goes so far as to say that he who prays is saved, he who prays not, is lost. These words, too, are explained readily enough. For if we must pray for strength to overcome grievous temptation, that is, temptation to mortal sin, and if Christ tells us that if we ask, we shall receive, it is plain that with prayer we shall find the power to resist that temptation. But if we pray

not, the chances are that nature or passion or the force of evil habit may prove too strong, and plunge the soul in mortal sin and thus endanger its salvation. For does not our Lord warn us in the words of St. John: "Without me you can do nothing"? These words mean that without Him we can do nothing in the Spiritual order, nothing for the soul's salvation.

Even in the Old Law we find a strong proof of the value and power of faithful prayer. When the Israelites were leaving Egypt they encountered their old enemy, King Amalec. The King engaged them in battle and Moses went up to a hill to pray for his people. "And when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel overcame: but if he let them down a little, Amalec overcame." And so two men were sent up to support the hands of Moses while in prayer. And then the chosen people conquered their foe. It was then not so much by the might of arms as by the power of prayer that victory was secured.

These few thoughts about the value of prayer should console those who, through age or sickness, or for some other reason, cannot engage in strenuous work for God and cannot perform other arduous sacrifices, or attend all the services of the

Church. They can at least pray. They can pray for themselves, for others, for our missions, for the whole flock of Christ. This prayer will never be in vain. Christ Himself said so. Those who engage in it are doing much in the upbuilding of Christ's Kingdom. They are practicing a noble duty, whose vast importance He Himself taught by example. Prayer brings down blessings upon all the people, blessings ten-fold or a hundred-fold, depending upon the fervor, sincerity, confidence and perseverance of the one who prays.

16. THE BENEDICTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

A young man once set out in great haste from a western city of our country to reach New York in time to receive the blessing of his dying father. He had not seen him for many years. But he wished to hear a last word of consolation and forgiveness from the aged parent who was soon to close his eyes in death.

This was a most worthy desire of the youth, and we do not wonder that he forgot all else in his eagerness to get back to his father's house and obtain a final blessing. But the children of the Church

can so often receive the blessing of their Father and Saviour Christ, and yet, so many neglect the opportunity. At our Benediction service Christ our Lord is exposed to our adoration and wishes to bless us all before we depart from His holy temple. And often so few are present to receive this token of His love. Many there are who pass by on the avenue or boulevard, just outside the church, but they think not of entering and of assisting at the Benediction service where they may be made glad with the precious gift of Christ's own blessing.

Why is this? Many of the faithful may say they have no time; others may allege that they are tired on Sunday evening and wish to stay at home; others again think that by attending Mass in the morning they have fulfilled all their obligations towards God. These excuses may perhaps be quite sufficient in some cases, but Catholics often stay away from Benediction simply because they fail to realize the solemn meaning of this beautiful service.

It is Christ Himself who blesses the assembled faithful with His own adorable Body, by the hands of His minister. It is His great love for the children of the Church that prompts Him to come forth from the tabernacle and to allow the sacred sign

of salvation to be made over those present. How lonely our churches would be, had we not the perpetual, inspiring presence of the King of kings on our altars! We would then be deprived of our greatest treasure, our surest hope, the source of all spiritual strength and refreshment. Perhaps then even the very personality of Christ would become dim and distant, perhaps even distorted. We would indeed still possess the Gospel accounts of His life and teachings. But how have those religious bodies, that no longer have the Eucharistic Lord and Master, dealt with the historic character of Christ? His teaching is misinterpreted, His miracles explained away, and His divinity is often denied.

But during every Benediction service Catholics implicitly voice the sublime confession of the blessed apostle Peter: "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." For it is only because He is God that we kneel down in humble adoration when He is lifted up in the monstrance to bestow heavenly blessings. It is only because He is the Son of the living God that we make the acts of reparation at the end of the service, and ask Him to accept our allegiance. At every Benediction service therefore we are reminded of one of the cardinal truths of

our precious faith — the Divinity of Christ the Son of God.

No wonder that some of the greatest luminaries of the Church have composed undying hymns of praise in honor of the "Great Sacrament." The "Tantum ergo Sacramentum" is the matchless Benediction hymn of the Church, chanted in all lands in honor of the Eucharistic King, and one of the most famous of mediæval Latin hymns. In the versicle and response sung after the sacramental hymn this holy Sacrament is rightly called "the Bread of Heaven, containing all sweetness." In the other Benediction hymn, our Lord is addressed as "O Saving Host, opening for us the gates of Heaven."

These expressions show the veneration the great saints had for the Sacrament of the altar. When you assist at Benediction you have an opportunity of joining in this solemn chorus of praise in honor of the august Sacrament, the Bread of Angels. Should you not consider it a high privilege to be present at this service from which you may go forth with the blessing of the great King upon you?

17. THE MASS

Unusual privileges and blessings that have been enjoyed for a long time easily lose their value to those sharing them. They are gradually accepted as a matter of course. Is there not danger that this may be the case also in the spiritual life and as regards the fine gifts of God? We have so many advantages and blessings in the spiritual order and they come to us so readily that we may be tempted to disregard their value and wonderful significance. Every day, throughout Christendom, the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered on countless altars. It is celebrated in the magnificent cathedral and in the little country church; in the populous city and in the lonely hamlet. We dare say that often, very often indeed, the dwellers near by pay little heed to the holy mysteries celebrated on these altars. Many Catholics, strange to say, find no time, no disposition, no motive urging them on to enter the church or chapel on week-days and assist at the solemnity. Why is this? One reason may have already been given. The Mass, if the expression may be pardoned, has become something commonplace. It is of every-day occurrence. And so it is nothing

unusual and nothing remarkable to many of the faithful.

But let us reason for a moment. Can things of eternal significance ever lose their value? Does the gift of God become less useful and less precious because it is so freely offered to us? The Mass is the renewal of the adorable sacrifice of Christ, the Son of God, on Golgotha. His blessed death on the Rood brought in a new era for the children of men, the era of love, when we may all say: "Abba, Father." For by the Cross on Calvary sin was taken away, our bonds were broken, and man once more became a child of God. Then God became indeed our Father to whom we may now have access on account of the death and redeeming work of His well-beloved Son. These gracious memories are renewed at every Holy Mass. Christ, our Saviour, offers Himself anew for the sins of men in the oblation of the altar.

How, then, can the Holy Mass be shorn of its tremendous power and consequences because it is offered up daily "from the rising to the setting of the sun?" Let us meditate at times on these sublime truths. Time was, in the days gone by, when

you went to Mass every day. It was when the heart was young, when you attended the Catholic school. Presence at Mass then, assuredly, did not seem a burden to you. You were told of its meaning for the Christian wayfarer through life. The Mass, you were taught, brought you many blessings. You were privileged to kneel in the adorable presence of your Saviour. You saw Him lifted up for your comfort and healing by the hands of the priest. The same graces and spiritual favors still reward the devout assistance at the hallowed sacrifice.

The Mass is a reparation for sin, for individual sin. It may be offered as a petition for grace. You may also use it as an occasion to thank your God for favors received. You may be present at it to fulfill the duty imposed upon all of us of praising God. It may be offered for the living and for the dead. May not these simple thoughts help you to a new resolve of attending more frequently on week-days at this holy sacrifice which was foreshadowed far back in the morning of time by the sacrifice of Melchisedech, and is now daily renewed for the hope and uplift of the children of the Church militant?

18. THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Many of us do not appreciate the consoling message brought home by that article of the Creed which reads: "I believe in the Communion of Saints." This part of our belief reminds us of the close union that exists at this moment between the three vast empires of the Church of God — on earth, in Heaven, in Purgatory. The souls that belong to these three empires are well-nigh innumerable and yet they are interested in one another's welfare and happiness, and try to promote one another's well-being.

Such is the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. We may remember, perhaps, what an impression the teaching made upon us when we first learned it from the Catechism. We were told that the saints of God in Heaven were related to us because they belonged to the great family of which we too were members. They had already finished the good fight and had departed to the kingdom where there will be no more toil and pain and struggle. And it was likewise said that other souls whom we once knew, and who are now no more, might be helped by us. These were the children of the Church Suffering in

Purgatory. No doubt, the teaching made a great impression on us at the time.

But we might not have been told one very important fact regarding the Communion of Saints. This is that the society and relationship, and mutual regard of those souls for one another, have lasted through nineteen centuries. There have been other organizations of men on earth which endured for a long time. But gradually owing to lack of interest on the part of the more distinguished members, or on account of the death of a ruler, or through dissension or warfare, these unions and kingdoms ceased to exist. They lacked the vital, permanent bond, a bond which the roll of the centuries could not break, and which the going and coming of men could not dissolve.

Here, then, is an inspiring thought concerning the Communion of Saints; it is a union of immortal souls, more numerous than those belonging to any other society or organization, and it will endure to the end of time. As long as precious souls are to be gained for the Kingdom of Christ — so long will the triple kingdom endure. Now what has made this great spiritual kingdom invincible in the wreck of ages, and what has lent it its strength to outlast

the dissolution of earthly realms? It is the fact that Christ's kingdom is built on the greatest motive power that can influence man — on the enduring principle of love. It was His one desire to sanctify men and to lift them up to the dignity of children of God, and finally to admit them to the beatific vision. For this high and holy purpose He founded His empire.

Earthly kingdoms, however, have all too often been builded on the unstable foundation of force and tyranny, on the doctrine that might is right. They were sometimes erected on the bodies and blood of men who were forced to fight and lay down their lives that others might gain the glory of conquest. How different the kingdom of the God-man, the Church of Christ composed of the three vast divisions of souls — all of them called to the same blessed and eternal inheritance. The teaching concerning the Communion of Saints is one of the many strong and inspiring helps proffered by Mother Church to her children who are still on the rugged upward path to the City Eternal.

19. DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Have you ever taken note of the fact that the

Church has not only provided for her children the larger devotions, such as the Way of the Cross, the devotion to the Sacred Heart, to the Virgin Mother, but has also given us beautiful short prayers and aspirations. We should often use the latter, for they not only remind us of certain truths of our faith, but in themselves they are consoling and uplifting, and their devout use is sometimes enriched with indulgences.

What a more becoming greeting than the one which our children are taught to use when their pastor enters the class-room: "Praised be Jesus Christ." Christ Himself is the greatest teacher and guide of youth. He takes special care of the little ones of His flock. He blesses those who honor His holy Name. He desires that due respect be shown to His ministers. Hence is it not appropriate that the children, who are brought up in His name, should early become familiar with that holy greeting? Those who reverently speak the praises of that holy Name shall experience, in the word of St. Bernard, that the sweet name of Jesus "gives true joy to the heart."

Sometimes we are recipients of some unusual grace or favor. Why should we not give thanks to

Him from Whom all blessings flow! We have such a short and efficacious formula of thanks, approved by the Church and daily used in the liturgy of the Holy Mass. It is the aspiration: "Deo gratias"—"thanks be to God." Our Lord loves a prayer of thanksgiving. When He had healed the lepers and when only one returned after the miraculous cure to give thanks, He mildly asked: "Where are the other nine?" But the saints used this pious ejaculation even when trials and misfortune befell them. They saw in these calamities Providence and the chastising hand of God. It would be well for us, too, to look upon crosses and adversities that befall us in the course of life's pilgrimage as sweet tokens of His special love for us. This sensible view of crosses and sufferings will put cheer and comfort into our hearts and enable us to bear up manfully under the burden. Hence even when the cup of affliction is pressed to our lips we may well say "Deo gratias."

When we begin some task in the course of the day we can insure its success, at least from the standpoint of supernatural merit, in no better way than by the pious aspiration authorized and sanctified by scriptural authority: "In nomine Domini"—"in

the name of the Lord." Not only large and apparently important works and undertakings of vast consequence may thus be hallowed and sanctified by invoking the sweet name of the Lord, but even our every-day toil and our round of ordinary duties. The consciousness that we are working not for human glory or for the vain applause of the multitude, but for the sake of the Lord Christ will lend courage and inspiration when weariness is about to overtake us.

There is nothing so helpful to the Christian engaged in the spiritual combat than a brief and efficacious appeal for help and pardon. And the Church like a gracious mother whispers to him this salutary orison: "My Jesus, mercy!" We know that the use of this petition has been recommended by the greatest saints of the Church. We all stand in need of mercy and forgiveness. In the dark hour of need and temptation and bitter conflict with the powers of evil let us say, but say with hope and confidence, "My Jesus, mercy!"

When we are about to answer the last great call and take our place in the vast army of the silent dead, we are once more taught a supplication, surpassing in strength and holiness. It is: "Jesus,

Mary and Joseph!" After we have praised the name of the Lord during life, after we have given thanks for both the blessings and crosses that have been our portion, after we have received mercy and the hope of pardon from Jesus, how appropriate that in that last great hour, we should invoke Jesus, the Saviour, Mary our mother, and Joseph, the patron of a happy death? Verily, we are abundantly blessed in the multitude of these pious aspirations, which the Church recommends for our use during the course of life's pilgrimage.

20. OUR LITURGICAL HYMNS

In his "Chapters in European History," Mr. W. S. Lilly says: "Not the least important chapter in European history is written in the hymns of the Christian Church." Other writers and scholars, even those not of our faith, have often commented upon the beauties and splendid meaning of these Latin hymns which form such an important part of our liturgy.

These hymns are an embodiment of the spirit, the life, the faith, the hope, the aspirations of the Middle Ages. They have been translated again and again into different modern languages and of some

of them there exists more than a score of different versions.

The private use of liturgical hymns very probably preceded their public use in the churches. For St. Jerome says that those who in his day went into the fields might hear "the plowman at his hallelujahs, the mower at his hymns, and the vine-dresser singing David's psalms."

Concerning these mediæval hymns a recent writer has said: "It is to be regretted that we have forgotten in these late days that the fundamental function of the knees is kneeling. The reason is clear, however. Kneeling is a manifestation of the emotions, and to-day it is hardly good taste to show emotion. . . . Now the spirit of the mediæval hymn is the spirit of kneeling, the spirit of adoration." This is true of all our great hymns, and more especially of the two sublime sacramental hymns—The *Tantum Ergo* and the *O Salutaris Hostia*.

St. Hilary of Poitiers, who died 369, first introduced such hymns into the public worship of the Church. After him, St. Ambrose, the great Bishop of Milan, devoted his literary talent to the writing of Latin hymns for liturgical purposes. His chants

may be regarded as the beginning of Christian poetry in the West. Sublime religious truths, expressed in austere simplicity but in majestic form, are the subject of the hymns of this learned doctor of the Church. Ambrose found many imitators, and a vast number of hymns was composed, not all of which, however, were honored by being introduced into the liturgy of the Church. Seven of these are often collectively called "the greatest mediæval Latin hymns." They are the *Laus Patriae Coelestis*, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, *Dies Irae*, *Stabat Mater*, the *Alleluja Sequence*, and *Vexilla Regis*.

The two most celebrated classes of these compositions — works which have exercised the talents of the greatest musical composers and of translators into almost all languages, are the *Dies Irae* (That Day of Wrath, that Dreadful Day) composed probably by Thomas of Celano, the companion and biographer of St. Francis of Assisi, and the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa* (By the Cross Sad Vigil Keeping), often ascribed to Jacopone da Todi, a member of the Franciscan brotherhood.

After the two sacramental hymns, those best known and very often heard in our churches, are

the two Pentecostal hymns — the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, and the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*. Of the former there are about sixty versions in English and it has sometimes been called “the most famous of hymns.” The latter has been styled the “Golden Sequence.” For “it is above all praise, because of its wondrous sweetness, clarity of style, pleasant brevity combined with wealth of thought, so that every line is a sentence.”

We have, then, in these sacred hymns an element which lends a precious charm to our liturgical services, especially to the Solemn High Mass, and to the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. In her frequent use of these hymns the Church shows herself the patron of art and the fruitful mother of the sublimest sentiments that can well up from the heart of man. May not these glorious hymns be looked upon as a faint echo of the everlasting hosannas sung in the City Celestial to the glory of the Eternal God?

21. THE SPIRIT OF FAITH

The lack of faith, of religious faith, of faith in the lasting worth and value of virtuous, God-fearing lives is responsible for much of the unrest and

dissatisfaction among people to-day. Many persons attach too much importance to mere external success, to worldly pomp and circumstance, to the work and position that bring them into public notice and cause them to be regarded as greater and more distinguished than their fellowmen. They forget that the "average man" may also put spirit and a splendid energy and wholeheartedness into his every-days tasks, which lend them a value and beauty, that shallow minds fail to see. Those on the other hand who always strive for the empty prizes of life, for the notice of men, and the glitter that for a brief space accompanies "success," may after a little while, be cast back upon themselves, be slighted by their friends and be bereft of the applause that once soothed their vain ambition. For uncertain and fickle is the frivolous world in the rewards dealt out to its votaries.

Persons, deceived by the gloss and notoriety that sometimes accompany the vain strivings of worldlings, are apt to forget the value of little things well done and performed with a worthy purpose or intention. There are but few careers that most of the time keep men in the full glare of public favor and approval. For to almost all persons life is,

after all, composed of a series of humdrum duties, of a succession of seemingly unimportant tasks. Whether it be the artist in his studio, the captain of industry in his office, the toiler in the workshop, or the mother in her home — the lives of these must be made successful by the wise use of the flying moments. Not one moment of itself is great or resplendent. It is rather the sum and collective value of these moments, well spent in little things, that lend dignity and distinction to human lives.

This is especially true of work performed by the toiler in the workshop and of the lives of the poor and humble of Christ's flock. These should remember that people of their class generally rate their work not too high, but too low. They ought to recall that in their labor there is not only bodily effort but soul effort, something spiritual and higher, that cannot be rewarded with money alone. Yea, they ought to bear in mind that as soon as to the bodily work there is added the good intention, the value of the work grows into infinity, and that from this moment it bears its best reward within itself, ennobled by the consciousness that it is performed not in the service of man, but in the service of the highest Lord and Creator of all things.

This value and reward depend ultimately upon the worker himself and not upon exterior conditions. And upon him, too, it will depend, to what degree his work, in virtue of this intrinsic value, shall exert a liberating, uplifting, wholesome and beneficial effect upon himself.

The life of our Blessed Mother teaches us the beauty and surpassing excellence of the spirit of faith. Her life was ever energized by faith. Hence she performed all her actions, howsoever lowly and obscure, illumined by the spirit of faith. She knew that the faithful performance of these obscure and ordinary tasks rendered her pleasing to her Divine Son and to the Eternal Father. The Fathers of the Church regard her as preëminently the type of faith. She was the lowly maid of Judea and yet she sang that inspiring canticle, the Magnificat, which tells of her own greatness, that canticle which has resounded for nigh two thousand years, accompanied by all the beauty and solemnity of our Catholic liturgy in the great Cathedrals of Europe as well as in the humble village church, — that canticle which tells of her surpassing dignity among all the daughters of Eve. And how dared that little humble maid, she who fled from the sight

of men, and who was found at prayer in her abode by the heavenly messenger coming to announce her dignity as the Mother of the Saviour, how dared she sing that song, which stands foremost amongst the songs that have ever fallen from the lips of men?

Ah! Faith, the spirit of faith, taught her the wonderful mysteries that were to be accomplished through her humble self. She recognized by means of her intellect, enlightened by faith, the grandeur of the mystery of the Redemption to be wrought through her.

And so through all her life we find Mary such an exemplar of living faith. On the faith of Mary in the words of the angel depended our Redemption, and Mary believed the seemingly unbelievable with an almost incomprehensible faith; she believed the wonderful message with an equally wonderful faith. For according to the words of the announcing angel she was to believe that she — the humblest of women — was that illustrious one, who was to tread upon the head of the old serpent. And Mary the humble maid believed it.

Hence if any one desire to know how both contempt and respect for self, humility and just pride,

may dwell together in the Christian heart, he will find the secret in that canticle of the Magnificat: "The Lord hath looked upon the humility of His handmaid — He that is mighty hath done great things for me." The spirit of faith teaches me my true grandeur and my true nobility. This grandeur and nobility consist in being a child of God by sanctifying grace. It does not consist in external accomplishments which pass away, in the possession of worldly pomp and circumstance which may surround a person to-day and be absent to-morrow. The spirit of faith prevents me from misunderstanding my real dignity and seeking it where it cannot be found. This nobility, of which I may be justly proud, consists in the supernatural state to which God has elevated me in the life of grace, preparing me for the life of glory and a participation in the divine nature (*divinae consortes naturae*, 2 Pet. I, 4).

22. INTERIOR MORTIFICATION

"Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish" is the stern mandate of the Lord Christ to those who are in earnest about the business of salvation. To save our souls we must be found at

death in the state of sanctifying grace, that is, free from unforgiven, mortal sin. But we cannot avoid that dreadful evil without practicing some degree of self-control, some restraint over the senses and the lower appetite, and without a resolute checking of the first slimy approach of grievous sin. Our Divine Lord goes so far as to say: "If thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off." This means that we must be ready to make any bodily sacrifice rather than offend the Lord God by serious sin.

The practice of mortification will enable us to avoid, or at least to beat down many dangers to the spiritual life of the soul. Exterior mortification, that is, self-denial or pain, which directly affects the senses and the body, is frequently mentioned in the Bible. The Fathers and the saints not only speak highly of this kind of mortification, but have given us the splendid example of truly mortified lives. In fact, there is not a saint in Heaven to-day who was not aided in his spiritual warfare by bodily mortification, sometimes continued for many years.

But besides this exterior self-denial, fasting, shortening the hours of sleep, inflicting bodily pain, etc., there is another very important kind of mortification. It is called interior, and is very necessary

if we would always remain in the state of grace. Thus, restraining curiosity of the eyes, not speaking in self-praise when there is occasion to do so, gladly accepting a rebuff or humiliation, keeping silence when the ready answer in self-defense is on the tongue — all these are interior mortifications. They are exterior only in so far as the body is to some extent concerned in them, but, says Bishop Hedley, “the pain is mental.” In fact, even exterior mortifications are of no avail, and help little in holding down rebellious inclinations of the flesh, unless they are accepted interiorly. To inflict self-hurt, out of a motive of vanity, is not the Christian virtue of mortification.

There are so many ways in which we can practice interior mortification. Going along the streets there are so many sights thrust upon the eye. Are they all worthy of admission, or are they apt to cause base and carnal thoughts? It is far more prudent and noble to close the eyes to these unworthy images. Many chances there are of ruling the tongue and not speaking the fault-finding word. A person who makes use of these little occasions in the proper way, gains much. For he gradually ac-

quires that splendid habit of moving and living in God's holy presence.

23. EXTERIOR MORTIFICATION

St. Paul humbly confesses that he chastised his body and kept it under subjection, lest after having preached to others, he himself became a castaway. The great Apostle thoroughly understood that as a follower of a Crucified Saviour he must love the Cross of Christ. But love of the Cross means acceptance of sufferings. Hence we find so many references in his letters to the Cross of Christ and to the tribulations which the lovers of that Cross must be ready to endure.

The necessity of bodily mortification, fasts, vigils, abstinence from certain comforts, etc., is proved to us by the teaching of God in the Sacred Scripture. It is made a condition of the supernatural, in other words, the really Christian life. No text of Holy Writ so clearly brings home to the members of Christ's Church the need of this virtue as those recorded in St. Luke (IX, 23): "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

The ancient religions of the East also insistently taught the importance of overcoming sin and sensual inclination by bodily chastisement. The Dervishes and Sannyasins, or wise men of India, performed and still practice self-tortures which cause sensitive people to shudder. We do not look upon such self-tormentors as models for ourselves, as they often are guided by base and unworthy motives in these practices. But we should not as followers of a Redeemer, who walked the path of suffering, try to shrink from everything that causes discomfort.

The saints all teach us the utility of this weapon in the spiritual warfare. The "*vince teipsum*," "conquer thyself," is written large in the annals of sanctity. St. Francis Borgia made this virtue the measure and test of holiness, as without it no one can grow in the spirit of prayer, or chastity, or humility.

At certain seasons of the Church year, Lent and Advent, we are especially called upon to practice some bodily or exterior mortification, especially fasting. In the Preface of the Lenten season Christians are told of the advantages of these holy practices. By corporeal fasts we repress our vices and lower desires. This is a great benefit to the

soul. It is also said that mortification lifts up the mind, i.e., makes it more fit to consider the things of God and of the eternal life. Finally it helps us to cultivate virtue and merits reward in God's Kingdom.

As companions of Christ, Whose life from Bethlehem to Calvary was one of continuous privation amid labor and poverty, one long act of mortification, we should consider it a holy privilege to suffer with Him and for Him, and thus have the consolation of following Him more closely.

24. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

One of the shortest and most eloquent sermons ever delivered, you can find in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. It was pronounced by Christ, the Teacher of all nations. Though short it is direct and to the point. There is no ambiguity about it; it contains no far-fetched allusions, no vague incentives to righteousness and well-doing. It is a talk for all men of all times. It contains neither introduction nor peroration. Every sentence comes home with a vivid force and is a direct appeal. Like every great sermon it instructs. It bears the hall-mark of great literature. For it is the ex-

pression of thoughts of universal and permanent interest, in language becoming its theme.

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain, and when he was sat down, His disciples came unto Him. And opening His mouth, He taught them.” These are the introductory words of the inspired writer. What is the first assertion in this marvelous bit of precious and divine eloquence? It is this beautiful and consoling remark:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

The poor in spirit are the humble, and they whose spirit is not set upon riches. Therefore, this sentence has a message for both the poor and the rich; it appeals equally to the man who has gold in abundance, to him who has a hovel for his abode and crumbs for food. What a much-needed lesson is brought out in these simple words! How sorely a deluded world, clamoring, struggling and striving for the passing things of time, needs this inspiring reminder! It is not gold and silver, and possessions in stocks and bonds that are worth while and that lend dignity and value to the individual. It is the being possessed of a Christ-like spirit, it is love of God and of the brotherhood

of man, that alone count in presence of the searcher of hearts.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.”

This, too, is a precept of universal application. When fierce anger sweeps over us, when we are tempted to use harsh language and bitter reproaches towards some brother who, we think, has offended us, then we may well and profitably recall the sweet words of the Master: Blessed are the meek. This recollection should be like oil upon troubled waters. Consideration of these words should cause the spirit of Christian love to take possession of the heart and check the fiery speech with which we were about to overwhelm one who, perhaps, had intended no evil. Thus we shall heap fiery coals upon his head, and gain for ourselves the blessings of peace. For the Psalmist has said: “But the meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace.”

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

Where find a stronger incentive to forgive our trespassing brethren than these words of the Sermon on the Mount? We all stand in need of

mercy and forgiveness. This we learn from the parable of the hard-hearted servant in the Gospel. We have perhaps often wronged our brother. Often may we have injured him by cutting word or by malicious action. Now the safest way to blot out injuries of this kind, done in the past, will be to cast out anger and furious resentment against those who have offended us.

“Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.”

This beautiful promise has always rewarded those who have striven to wear the white flower of a blameless life. No greater happiness than that resulting from keeping one's heart free from the vice and degrading sin of those who defile their immortal soul by committing the evil which is an abomination in His sight. We read in the Psalms: “The innocent in hands, and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor: he shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God the Saviour.”

25. A GOOD INTENTION

The story is told in some of the old devotional books of a little child which tries laboriously to

write out the series of digits just learned at school. It toils and struggles with the strange symbols, but cannot succeed in reproducing them in their proper order. A long number of zeros is the only result of this first attempt at writing numbers. But lo! the Angel Guardian bends over the child, gently takes its hand, and puts a single little stroke before the row of meaningless ciphers. What first was nothingness, has become a number exceeding great.

We often strain and struggle at some task and at best muddle through it in a half-successful way. We accomplish so little from the standpoint of those critics, who weigh everything by results which can be measured or weighed, compared and registered. It were deplorable, indeed, were this slim and unsatisfactory outcome the only reward of our pains and well-meant efforts.

But though the fond expectation of brilliant success is quite often defeated, the efforts will not be unrewarded. What the single stroke achieved for the row of zeros, the "good intention" brings about for the permanent value of our exertions. A striving in "Nomine Domini"—in the Name of the Lord—is never in vain. Part of the work always bears fruit, if not in results that are apparent to

the eye, at least in reward and merit that are treasured there "where no moths devour."

The laborers in the vineyard who had come at the eleventh hour, received as much as those who had "borne the burdens of the day and the heats." According to our standard of economy this is altogether wrong. But cannot the Lord pay out as He will? Shall we continually apply our narrow, thumb-rule standards? Remember that all labor is great and dignified in the sight of the Lord.

The Master of the vineyard, no doubt, saw the good will and energy of those who had been called at the eleventh hour and therefore He rewarded them liberally. The "good intention," which we are recommended to make at the dawn of every new day of toil, is something too valuable to pass by. For it lifts the task out of the sphere of the commonplace, and makes it worthy of reward in the eternal mansions.

26. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

One of the characteristics of the religious life of our times is its uncertainty in matters of doctrine. We see persons following self-styled religious leaders who have no authority to teach or preach; we

see churches organized to-day to be dissolved on the morrow. A mass of contradictory doctrine is put forth by men who recognize no central authority, and who acknowledge no body of doctrine which is to be held alike by all the members of the church. This dissension and this disunion in matters of faith have been characteristic of the religious life of the world ever since the Reformation. History bears record how quickly a religious society, when separated from the true church, splits up into opposing factions.

Now the unity which is one of the distinguishing marks of the Catholic Church, the true Church of Christ, is all the more wonderful when contrasted with the unfortunate dissension in the so-called sects. These religious bodies no longer believe the same doctrines which were handed down by those who started their particular church. This disunion becomes more marked from day to day.

And yet it is easy to see that a church in order to be the true church must be necessarily one, one in its doctrine, one in its obedience to a central authority, and one in its means of grace.

The parable of the mustard seed teaches us that the true Church must remain, throughout the

centuries, in continuous and uninterrupted union with the small beginnings of the church as it existed in the day of the Apostles. The mustard seed, which in its growth and development has been regarded as a picture of the growth and development of the Church, grew into one, and only one, tree. Its branches, though spreading out in all directions, are none the less united with the trunk, which has come forth from the insignificant germ.

In this parable which presents in so striking a manner the unity of His Church, Christ rebukes those who deal largely in the high sounding phrase, that "one church is as good as another provided those who belong to it do what is right." For as the tree, which grows from the mustard seed, retains the most perfect unity of nature and essence in the branches and in the whole plant, so the Church which is spread throughout the world must retain true and perfect unity in all essential parts: "one body and one spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all" (Eph. iv, 4, 6). Hence it is not a matter of indifference to which church we belong, but we must seek fellowship with the society established by Christ.

Again, there is but one true Church of Christ

if Christ founded but one. For in this case all others are contrary to the Divine will, since He imposed the obligation upon all men to seek communion with the one Church which He founded, and, consequently, to shun communion with all others.

Christ founded but one Church if He gave the charge to teach all nations only to the College of Apostles united under St. Peter as their common head. Now, all the passages of Scripture which refer to this mission show that this was the case. Any community, therefore, which does not derive its origin from this one mission, confided to His Apostles, and in them to their successors, cannot have been founded by Christ and, consequently, cannot be His true Church.

This unity, which we have seen to be the distinguishing feature of the Church of Christ, must be threefold and must be found in the Church of Christ at all times and in all places. There must be, first, the same faith; secondly, the same sacrifice and the same sacraments; thirdly, the same common head.

As to the unity or oneness of faith which has ever distinguished our Church, history itself bears witness. The great councils, or authorized gather-

ings of teachers of the Church, whether convoked in ancient times at Nice or Ephesus, or in modern times at Trent, have always and unanimously defended the same faith.

As to the unity of authority, we must remember that Christ Himself constituted but one supreme power which was not to cease when the Apostle, upon whom He first conferred the prerogative of watching over the unity of the faith, had passed away. It was to Peter that He gave this special assurance: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." If this Church, built upon the rock of Peter has fallen into error, then the gates of hell have prevailed against it and the promises of Christ have failed. But history bears witness that the Church has never taught error in matters of faith. At all times, moreover, have its members used and enjoyed the same means of sanctification, even as they have been united under one common head.

27. THE SANCTITY OF THE CHURCH

Sanctity is one of the notes or characteristics of the true Church of Christ. It stands to reason that

an institution founded by our Saviour to lift man from sin and to enable him to save his immortal soul, is rightly called holy. Now the Church has been established by our Lord to lead men to eternal life and is, therefore, a holy organization. This is its one and only purpose, its very *raison d'être*. For the Church in spite of all the foolish calumnies of her enemies, never has been, is not to-day, and never will be, a political institution, serving political interests or ambitions. Hers is the great and all-essential business of salvation. To save precious human souls from sin and folly and everlasting woe, and to direct them on the path that leads upward to the city eternal — this is her God-given mission.

Men, of course, have a right to ask for the proof and pledge of the Church's sanctity. They will grant that the Church has a holy Founder. They will perhaps admit that its teachings and doctrines are uplifting and pure and noble. They may concede that it offers certain helps to lead a good Christian life, as for instance, sacraments, devotions, prayers, etc. But they will not admit that the Church is actually holy. Where, they ask, are the holy members of the Church? Where are the sainted priests and bishops and the holy Catho-

lic laity? They are rather inclined to think that Catholics are no better than their neighbors. Are not Catholics guilty of like sins and misdeeds? Our Lord said: "From their fruits you shall know them," and people want to see the fruits of the Church's sanctity.

Now these objections are clearly stated and unfortunately, it is but too true, that many members of the Holy Church of Christ do not give evidence that they appreciate membership in His Church. But yet these contentions, when examined with an unbiased mind, are not to the point. Christ our Lord did not say and did not promise that all the members of His Church would actually become saints. Freedom of will is not destroyed by adhering to the Catholic communion nor is the liberty to choose the ways of sin rather than those of righteousness thereby curtailed. In a sermon preached at the Second Council of Baltimore, Rev. P. J. Ryan clearly discussed this subject. He said: "The sanctity of the Church does not imply the sanctity of each of her members. She is not an exclusive congregation of the predestined; she has within her pale the foolish as well as the wise virgins of the parable. The tares and the wheat grow together,

until the angel reapers of the harvest-time separate them. Now, as in her early days, are found a Judas to betray and a Peter to deny. By her sanctity is meant that she is holy in her essential life; the Holy Ghost Himself, the indwelling spirit, sent by her Founder to abide with her forever; in her means of sanctification, her sacraments and doctrines, and in the abundant fruits, which in institutions and individuals, these means have produced. She is holy, and leads others to holiness, as her Founder did. He did not sanctify every individual He met, but gave to all the means of sanctification. She simply continues the work He began in heaven and came on earth to perfect. This mission of sanctification began immediately after the mission of sin, and must continue whilst the mission of sin is to be defeated."

These words show that the Church may still be called holy, even though all those who claim communion with her, do not attain to the full stature of perfect sanctity. But yet when we look back upon the records of the Church's progress through the ages, what a host of saintly men and women we behold, who owe their eminent sanctity to the Church? It is hard even to begin to enumerate the saints of any particular century of the Church's

existence. Let us merely look at the lives of certain men, who are not only illustrious as saints of the Catholic Church, but whose names shine in history as marvelous apostles of charity, as heralds of Christian civilization or as martyrs for the Church of Christ. Let us think for a moment of that lovable man of God, who has won the esteem of men of all shades of religious belief — and no belief at all — St. Francis of Assisi. His name is synonymous with the most sublime love and regard for even the lowliest and poorest of his fellowmen. His perfect detachment from money and from riches, from goods and possessions, from all the things of earth, has been an inspiring example to thousands to “go and do likewise” — to serve, as he did, Christ in the person of the poor. He has won the richest praises and the most enthusiastic testimony from those without the Church. He founded that great and splendid Order of the Friars Minor, or the Franciscans as they are generally called.

This is only one of the vast number of canonized saints of the Church who owe their marvelous holiness to the fact that they were faithful children of the Holy Church and eagerly embraced

those means of sanctification which are held out to us as well. They have set an example for all time. Some modern philosophers have preached a gospel of the right of the mighty and the strong. They have proclaimed a new freedom — a freedom coming to those who spurn the moral law that binds the “common herd.” But often their actions were a sad, strange comment on the proud gospel they preached and — practiced. They called themselves supermen. But it is only in the saints that we find those who rise above the common run of men, and therefore they are the real supermen. How glorious and inspiring to recall that goodly company of youths and maidens who have triumphed over self and self-love, over the allurements of a sinful world and the snares of the evil spirit! What an encouragement to the weak and to the sorely-tempted soul to behold a youth struggling to keep unstained the highest possession of the good man, his virtue and honor — and out of the conflict to win the splendid triumph! To see the maiden beset by the vanities and detestable wiles of a sinful world, and yet bear through life unstained the white robe of innocence placed upon her in baptism!

And besides these actual fruits of sanctity in the Church we must also remember that she has a holy Founder, as well as a holy doctrine and that she treasures all the means of holiness. It is not necessary to go into the explanation of these features of her sanctity. Suffice it to say that the possession of this note of sanctity together with the other three qualities of unity, catholicity and apostolicity will enable her to exist to the end of time. You and I, your children and your children's children, will take their places beside the vast army of the silent dead, the centuries will come and go, wars will be fought and won, kingdoms and dynasties will rise and crumble into dust,— but the Church, the Church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, will ever exist among men, sweetly and safely leading those of good will to their Father in Heaven.

28. THE MISSION

The writer one day happened to fall in with a noted Chautauqua lecturer and the conversation drifted to spiritual “retreats” and missions. “Oh, yes,” said the latter, “I know what these Catholic missions and retreats are—something like our

Protestant revivals, only a little less shouting and a good deal more thinking."

There is certainly something worth pondering in this remark of a man who has a nation-wide fame as a brilliant lecturer. It happily brings to the surface one of the essentials of the two or three weeks' mission, as it is generally given in our parishes. For those who "make the mission" are earnestly invited to do one thing — to think on the great truths of faith proposed in the sermons. The rest — fervent resolutions, good confessions, restoration of ill-gotten goods, giving up proximate occasions to mortal sins, etc., will follow naturally from the "hard thinking" on the substance of the mission sermon.

Nor do we believe much in "shouting" on these occasions. In fact, we are inclined to look with suspicion upon the "confessions" of men who, we are told, rise up in prayer-meeting, assert that they have the Holy Ghost and that they have accepted the Lord Christ, and as evidence of this, proceed to shake hands with everybody in sight. The "conversion" frequently stops right there. The "convert" goes out and instantly forgets what

he shouted about and wonders why he shook hands with that tall, ungainly man whom he had never seen before.

“Less shouting and a good deal more thinking” — it seems to be the very rule every experienced missionary wants those who are listening to him to observe. He does not want them to get up in the church and persuade the congregation that they are on the safe side with God. He does not want them to go home and do this. But he puts before them, with all the eloquence that only the heart inflamed with true zeal for the glory of the Lord can command, a few plain, “hard sayings” on the end of man, on mortal sin, on the punishment of that terrible evil, on Judgment and on Hell. Then he prays with his audience and dismisses them with the friendly advice: “Think it over.”

And though no efforts have been made in order to arouse hearts and fan enthusiasm, the listeners — many of them men who have not visited the church or the confessional for years — go home, their hearts stirred to the depths. They have begun “to think.” The thinking has borne fruit. For next Saturday one of the parishioners, who has not seen his neighbor, Mr. B., at services for many years, is

somewhat surprised to see him edging his way closer and closer to the crowded confessional. What has happened? Mr. B. made the mission. He did not shout about it. He heard the sermon, he "thought" and the grace of God did the rest.

And so even in these days of little faith the Holy Spirit is active in His Church, blessing the words of the priest and of the missionary, and winning back precious souls from the slavery of sin to the liberty of the children of God.

29. "I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD"

The representation of Christ as the Good Shepherd of our souls is one of the favorite themes of Christian art. It is at the same time one of the most consoling and encouraging aspects of the life of our Divine Master that the picture of the Good Shepherd recalls to us. It is good and proper at all times that we remember that Christ is our Shepherd and that we are His beloved flock. The early Christians loved to depict the image of Christ, the Good Shepherd, on the doors and walls of the catacombs, whither they had been compelled to flee by the pagan persecutor. They drew inspiration from this representation and it reminded them of the con-

soling truth that their Divine Leader was ever with them. In the strength of this belief they faced opposition and trial and fought the good fight that led them to salvation.

Christ has become a Good Shepherd for every member of the Church militant. By Baptism we were received into His fold and it was through His care and fatherly solicitude that we have been preserved from the attacks of ravening wolves who ever try to deprive us of the gift of faith and of the liberty of the children of God. In the Holy Eucharist He nourishes us and makes us strong against rebellious passions from within. To His priests He gives knowledge and understanding that they may explain to us aright the word of His doctrine and ever lead us unto good and fruitful pastures.

Christ's fold to-day is, then, the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. But alas! many there are who look for salvation elsewhere than in the Church of Christ. They still cling to the name of Christians, but seek their happiness in un-Christian ways. They refuse to be docile members of the flock. The wisdom of the Church is not sufficiently "advanced" for their tastes. They have read a

“modern book ” or listened to the suave, smooth speech of some modern gospeler. Then they imagine that they have discovered a weak point in that Christian armor which for nearly two thousand years has been the pride and the strength of countless souls and has enabled them to reach the City Eternal. The splendid teachings of a Paul and of an Augustine, of an Athanasius and of Thomas of Aquin, are not sufficient for them. The many martyrs who gave their blood for Christ and for the doctrine of the Apostles mean nothing to them. They pretend to find sounder doctrine in the empty verbiage of self-styled religious leaders and pastors.

Souls led astray by such teachers are easily brought into strange pastures and thus become the prey of false prophets. They are advised to interpret the Bible according “to their own light.” And vicious conclusions are often preached by them as solid truth. They even attack the Divinity of Christ. An eternal hell for the reprobate no longer appeals “to their sense of justice.” For they say that this belief smacks of the “dark ages.”

These are some of the false preachings of the hirelings, of the false prophets, of the wolves in sheep’s clothing. There are many prophets of this

kind. They work in the dark and in the open, in season and out of season. They have their publications which they freely distribute by the thousands. Verily, we see here one phase of that age-long contest between truth and falsehood, between light and darkness, between Christ and the world. But in the end the Good Shepherd will triumph over His enemies. There will be one fold and one pasture.

It behooves us, however, who are children of light, who belong to the one true flock, to let our light shine before men. Many there are who through no fault of theirs are still in darkness, and are still looking for "the kindly light." They know not where to turn. They perhaps needs us, need our prayers, and the example of a good Christian life, to lead them out of the encircling gloom. Actions are more telling than words. What happiness for us to bring some soul closer to the good Shepherd of Christendom, and to help ever so little to realize the prophecy that one day there shall be but "one fold and one shepherd."

III. WHEN THE LAMP OF HOPE BURNS LOW

30. WEARINESS IN WELL-DOING

Sometimes a depression comes over the soul which prompts it to grow lax in its attempts at well-doing and at straining upwards towards the better things. This may be at times the result of mere physical exhaustion. Again it may steal upon the soul because some long-cherished and favorite plan has suddenly come to naught. It may also be caused by secret pride which rebels because sufficient notice has not been taken of previous endeavors, or it may really be a temptation of the evil spirit, who strives to keep the soul from further effort along the lines of her good resolutions.

In all these cases it is best not to lose hope, but to keep on precisely with that work or undertaking which we are tempted to discontinue. It is not necessary that brilliant, palpable success should crown our every effort at doing something for God, for our Church, for our own soul, or for the good of

the neighbor. Perhaps it is better that we be kept in the dark occasionally as to the value of our efforts in the sight of God. If we have a good intention in our undertaking, if we do not allow self-love or self-seeking to creep in and cast a blight over our motives, the value, even of little efforts, is great in the sight of God, though they seem insignificant when judged by external standards.

In fact it is well worth while to recall the value of little things when tempted by weariness in well-doing. There is a poem called "The Petrified Fern," which tells of a little fern-leaf, green and slender, that grew on a mountain centuries ago. It grew unnoticed for "rushes tall and moss and grass grew around it and no foot of man ere trod that way." Mighty convulsions and changes took place in nature, mountains and avalanches changed their course. "But the little fern was not of these; did not number with the hills and trees; only grew and waved its wild, sweet way, none ever came to note it day by day." Then one day there came a great upheaval of the ocean, the woods and plains were swallowed up and these destructive forces "crushed the little fern in soft, moist clay, covered it and hid

it safe away." Thus it lay apparently lost and useless for many centuries.

"Useless? lost? There came a thoughtful man,
Searching nature's secrets far and deep;
From a fissure in a rock steep
He withdrew a stone, o'er which there ran
Fairy pencilings, a quaint design —
Veinings, leafage, fibers clear and fine,
And the fern's life lay in every line!
So, I think God hides some souls away,
Sweetly to surprise us the last day."

What a beautiful illustration this is of the value of little works and little things, well accomplished! Perhaps, years after, the little deed will give evidence of itself, and will blossom forth into fruit of fair and seemly proportion, even though at first it was hardly noticed by men.

In the second place, we ought to renew our hope when tempted by discouragement in the pursuit of high spiritual ideals and in the constant combat against the rebellious inclinations of our lower nature. Does not Isaiah say so beautifully, and so cheerily: "They that hope in the Lord shall re-

new their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Is. 40, 31).

Hope is that confidence in God which prompts us to look forward to eternal life with the sweet assurance that he will give us all the means needed for its realization. Now one of the results of this hope is precisely a trusting in God in the trials and struggles of life. In these days when the beautiful virtue of hope is put to such a strong test by the calamities falling upon the Church, by great disasters, and by the ruin visited upon nations we should, each one of us "hope in the Lord" in order to "renew our strength." And the languor and depression that sometimes grip us will vanish away and we will be able to do our share manfully as children of God and as members of Holy Church.

31. COURAGE IN ADVERSITY

It is not a little disheartening to find some of our people who have long lived in easy circumstances suddenly lose heart and fling away hope, as soon as adversity befalls them. It is dreadful to learn that sometimes they fall into dark despair and do away with that great gift over which God

alone has full dominion — their own life. As if this terrible act were to end all their sufferings and put an end to their worry! It seems at times as if our generation is becoming less and less inured to put up with the inevitable trials of life.

Our forefathers were made of sterner stuff. They knew how to accept the bitter with the sweet.

We have often listened in wonder to the stories of the pioneer days and marveled how they could have lived through such hardships and long-continued privations. But not only did they live through it all. They handed on to their posterity a precious inheritance; frequently, not only a fortune, accumulated by honest toil, but the more precious heritage of a good name, and of the true faith, kept amid trials which might have proved disastrous to a less sturdy generation.

Faith, the true faith, here we have the watchword, the talisman which guided them through days filled with woe and through nights of agony and of burning pain. Perhaps our faith has grown dim. We have perhaps become victims of that dread evil — religious indifference. We may still have a few objects of piety in our homes, and perhaps go to Mass on Sunday, if the weather is agree-

able, and there is nothing else to do — but this limits the practice of faith in many households.

Then comes the inevitable cross, a death in the family, lingering sickness or racking pain, loss of fortune, remorse and worry caused by an ungrateful child; one or another evil to which our daily existence is ever exposed. Then if faith be not strong, if we remember not that we have here no lasting home, if our heart clings solely to creatures, to ease and sluggish comfort, to friends and fortune, to gold and glitter,—then, no wonder that the slimy tempter steals into that worldly, unchristian heart, benumbed by loss of faith, and that then he whispers the frightful suggestion!

“*Sursum Corda*”—lift up your hearts—this should be the aspiration and motto of the Christian, when beset by the troubles and burdens of life. “Into each life some rain must fall, some days must be dark and dreary.” Such is the teaching even of worldly wisdom. For we cannot expect an unbroken run of smiling days, and of hours laden, every one of them, with brightness and glory. There must be intermingled the day of sorrow and the hour of trial. We are followers of the Crucified Saviour. We are His children. He is the

Master. It is not for us to seek a flowery path when the Master walked the thorny way of tears and afflictions.

Faith then teaches us how to regard these sorrows that suddenly break upon the happiest life. This faith teaches us that "crosses are ladders that reach to heaven." Even sorrow and woe, and pain and bitter trials, have their well-appointed place in life. How shallow and flighty and unbearable would not many a character be, if it had not been schooled in the school of affliction! But now it is reliable and strong because it has been forced to experience sorrow. How vain, and perhaps, even repellent, would be the piety and spirituality of some persons, if trouble and tribulation had not taught them salutary lessons! Let us not, as Christians, be outdone in wholesome philosophy and in our attitude towards the trials of life, by those who have not the gift of faith. They try to tide over stormy days and hours of bitterness by a cheerful exterior and by an indomitable optimism. Let us who are called to fellowship with the Man of sorrows, who know something about the Mater Dolorosa likewise remain strong and valiant when the "inevitable happens," when the cup of pain is pressed to our

lips. For are we not told that a benign Providence watches over us, and that without the will of the Divine Master not a hair of our head can be injured?

32. LITTLE JOYS

As the body of the honest worker soon becomes tired by excessive toil and strenuous tasks, so the mind and heart of the sensualist easily become wearied and surfeited by prolonged indulgence. For like the bodily powers, the capacity of mind and heart are limited, and riotous living sooner or later brings its own penalty.

It is not, therefore, the giving of full satisfaction to every debasing cry of the senses, nor yielding free rein to the wild clamors of the heart, that produces real and enduring contentment. The latter cannot be found on this earth. It is a most insane quest to seek it in the life of the senses and by plunging headlong into the whirlpool of carnal delights. For, as just said, these soon weary the mind and soul and often drive their hapless victim to self-destruction.

It is the "little joys," those that are readily secured and that are within reach of rich and poor

alike, which make no demands upon strength of body or mind, that tend to stir up the secret springs of gladness in the heart of man. It is true the heart must be prepared to appreciate these sources of joy. The beauty of field and meadow, the rainbow in all its glory, the laughter of children, the charm of song and story, the beauty of the cathedral and works of art, the warmth of genuine friendship, the happy reunion of the family where peace abides — these are some of the unfailing founts of sweetest and purest joy. Noblest joy of all, and one which is frequently found when the other simple joys are known, is the joy and peace springing from a good conscience, from the feeling that we have tried to be right with God.

Those who have once experienced the “little joys” do not care to exchange them for pleasure of the senses and for delights bought with gold. The story is told of John, “the merry soap-maker,” who was tempted to give up his trade and happiness for the wealth and position of a rich devotee of pleasure. But John soon tired of the delights purchased with money and sighed for the good, happy days when he knew the meaning of peace and contentment.

The "little joys" are ever within our reach. It were the greatest folly to ignore or even condemn them and go in quest of those alluring pursuits which promise golden hours, but whose attainment frequently turns to ashes in the mouth.

33. BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

A great master of the spiritual life, St. Ignatius, says that sickness is no less a gift than health. We are to understand by this that we can serve God just as well by bearing up patiently under sickness and trial as by zealous labors undertaken for the salvation of souls and by heroic mortifications.

In other words, this saying teaches us that blessings frequently come to us in disguise. Sickness, especially if long and painful, is something we all naturally shrink from. We dread it as a terrible inconvenience. We only think of the discomfort it causes to us or to those who must wait upon us. But we are apt to forget the finer qualities it may bring forth in the soul of the patient. There is resignation and humility, and fortitude and patience — beautiful virtues all of them — which may be learnt, perhaps for the first time, on the sickbed. And if these be so thoroughly acquired as never to

be lost afterwards, the sickness was, indeed, a gift in disguise. For without it these precious qualities would not have come to the soul.

And so it is with other trials that befall us in a life-time. Nothing happens unforeseen. To the person of faith even hardships and sudden calamity have their value and meaning. God can draw good from evil. The trial may have been very necessary to strengthen your character, to teach you an important lesson, to root out a vicious inclination which might have endangered your salvation. In these cases the blow was certainly a blessing in disguise. For the spiritual advantage far outweighs the little material discomfort.

We are apt to notice only one side of the inevitable ills that befall us. This is the side that causes pain and annoyance, or stirs us out of sluggish ease and comfort. Naturally, we resent thus being deprived of the convenience we consider our due. But let us be brave and large-hearted. What to-day seems a cross exceedingly heavy, a blow cruel in the extreme, may in the course of time turn out to be a heaven-sent blessing. Saint Joseph was told at night to fly with the Child and His Blessed Mother into Egypt. It was, naturally

speaking, an annoying command. Yet it was one act in the grand drama of the Redemption of the human race from sin, and slavery to passion and the powers of evil. Untold good has been wrought in other souls by the contemplation of that act which wrought temporary hardship to the Holy Family.

Looking upon undeserved trials and misfortunes with the eyes of faith is the part of a brave soul. And faith tells us that there is a silver lining to the cloud, that the trial may become a stepping-stone to higher virtue and bring us closer to the heart of God.

34. A GREAT POET ON HAPPINESS

The quest of happiness is the great impelling quest of men at all times. Even the seemingly apathetic follower of the Buddhist sect, whose highest ambition is to attain Nirvana, believes in some kind of happiness. But how few there are who attain the object of their ardent quest! Many there are who set out with high hope, when their hearts are young, with the purpose of some day attaining the object of their one desire — soul-satisfying contentment and happiness. But ere long they are foiled in their efforts and bitterly con-

fess that happiness is like the will-o'-the-wisp, always eluding an eager grasp.

Let us look at the lives of some of the world's worthies and favorites who are generally supposed to have obtained all that the heart of man could desire. Have they attained real happiness? Napoleon, dying a prisoner of war in St. Helena, and reviewing the superb conquests of his earlier years, dies with regret in his restless heart. Other mighty conquerors and potentates, surfeited sensualists and children of fortune, expire with the longing of unfulfilled desires on their lips.

Goethe, who has sometimes been called the greatest poet of the nineteenth century, tells us towards the end of his life what he thought of the phantom-pursuit of earthly joy and glory. He wrote:

“When all is said my life has been nothing but care and work. I can even say that in my seventy-five years, I have not had four weeks of real happiness. It has been a continuous rolling up hill of a stone which must ever be pushed again from the bottom.”

Now why is this? Why is the quest hardly ever achieved? The answer is very obvious. Men do not take the right path to reach the goal of happi-

ness. Goethe's own career offers an illustration. Few men of letters attain such high distinction during their life-time as the German bard. Kings and nobles showered their favors upon him. He was sought out by those who were regarded as the leaders of society. He had worldly goods in abundance. But yet, his heart was poor. He was a man of large vision and supreme imagination, yet he had not the priceless gift of faith. Though in his great work *Faust* he harks back to the mellow days of mediæval faith and of glad submission to the unseen Creator, yet his soul was not uplifted. For he believed not that Christ had come to teach a new message of love and peace and genuine happiness to the children of men. In fact, he sneered and showed his contempt for those doctrines which are the source of sweetest joy and noblest inspiration to the loyal children of the true Church.

And hence, though he was gifted with vision and imagination as few of the great world poets have possessed, he went through life not impelled by the highest ideals, but with an eye ever fixed upon the empty reward which a shallow world offers to its votaries. But these rewards, at some time or other,

become to him who achieves them, as ashes in the mouth.

How superior is the lot of those, on the contrary, who go through life without securing the passing prizes of fortune, but whose heart is inspired by visions of the eternal reward, beckoning them onward from beyond the bournes of time? Though their feet are fixed on the earth, their aspirations, their desires, and their hearts' desires are in heaven. Their "Sursum Corda," their frequent upward gazes to their home in the hereafter, sweeten their toil, and enable them to go forward courageously, manfully, and with hope in their hearts, through life's weary pilgrimage.

35. THE JOYOUS HEART

The Liturgy of the Mass contains frequent exhortations to spiritual joy. Quite often the Introit, or opening prayer of the Holy Sacrifice, is an invitation to rejoice in the Lord. "Rejoice, again I say, rejoice," is the burden of one Mass, while another Sunday is called "Laetare" Sunday — Sunday of Joy. Some of our beautiful church hymns, as the "Regina Coeli," are hymns of gladness, while

the "Vexilla Regis," like the song of a triumphant conqueror, tells the children of the Church militant to rejoice in "the mystery of the Cross," and the "Pange Lingua" calls upon us to join in the "noble triumph" of the same sacred symbol.

One of the great bishops of our Church — Keppeler of Rottenburg — beholding the gloom and pessimism that has seized upon men to-day, wrote a book of spiritual joy, and invited this generation to a new "Sursum Corda." "Lift up your hearts to the joy-giving mysteries and truths of the Church," says the learned prelate. He called his book "More Joy," because he saw the need of greater gladness for men in these days of economic stress, of social upheaval, and alas! of little faith.

And such an appeal for deeper and more lasting joy is sorely needed, in what Bishop Keppeler calls our "joyless time." There is indeed a wild race for pleasure and sensual excitement. But often these very pursuits only intensify sorrow and sadness in many a heart. The happy Middle Ages spoke of a merry "Easter Laughter." Those ages realized the meaning of rising with the Lord Christ from sin to a new life of grace and spiritual freedom. But to-day large sections of society do

not know how to enter into the spirit of the great feasts of the Church and do not heed their message of "Rejoice, again I say, rejoice."

Those who read the signs of the times carefully will admit that in spite of material progress and a certain "social uplift" we have not succeeded in diffusing joy and lasting contentment among the masses. The talk about pessimism, social unrest and discontent, economic depression with its accompanying evils, blighted ambitions among both rich and poor, has unfortunately a basis in actual conditions. Why, too, all these suicides, this evident anxiety of shifting the burden of life and life's responsibilities? Do they not frequently result from a false persuasion that life's evils are too great to be borne?

To all these persons suffering from mental or physical woe, Christianity comes with a consoling message and with a gospel of hope. For Christianity is in fact a religion of hope and joy and strength. It would fail of its mission if it had not the power of lifting the afflicted, of healing the wounded in mind and heart, and of putting cheer and inspiration into blighted lives. At the moment when the Redeemer gave up His life on the Cross there was

opened a new era for the children of men — the era of peace, and joy and freedom in the service of the Lord.

But in order to participate in the spiritual gladness and freedom of the New Dispensation men must avoid sin — sin, the one great evil, the disturber of God's wise moral order, and the cause of so much suffering among nations and in individuals. The joyous heart is not the reward or the privilege of those who offend the Lord, their God. It is frequently the reward of well-doing in God's service. A heart attached to the sinful things of earth and coveting the vanities that pass away will hardly share in the spiritual gladness purchased for us by our Saviour. When we have once attained to this spiritual joy in the Lord, we should try to "pass it on," to spread sunshine round about us, and to give evidence that for us the Christian life means peace, contentment, service, joy and charity in the Lord.

36. THE FAITH OF THE MILLIONS

Have you, as a child of our Church, ever thought that you belong to a world-wide society, which knows no limits of nation or flag or color? Your faith and creed are not those of merely a thousand

or a hundred thousand, but of millions from all climes and nations. You belong to a Church, which is Catholic, that is world-wide, loved and acknowledged wherever there are children of the race of men. Her creed is professed in a hundred tongues, her ministers announce the glad tidings of truth and salvation, in innumerable dialects. Wherever you go, you are at home, for the millions are with you, are on your side, and make profession of the same faith.

This wonderful unity in things essential is all the more remarkable in a world so changing as ours. Theories are set up to-day to be overthrown on the morrow. In politics, in statecraft, in poetry, art, and literature, there are changing schools and fancies. The dictum of the old Greek Philosopher—"everything is in a perpetual flow"—is true of all things, save the faith of the millions.

The millions of the one, true, Catholic and Apostolic Church do not change their faith. It is the same to-day, yesterday, forevermore. For our Church is founded on the adamant rock. These millions may hold different political creeds, they may belong to different schools of social reform, they have different standards of living. Yet in the

temple of truth, in God's Church, in things essential, they are one. What a glorious and consoling reflection, this remembrance of our unity!

And so when we are tempted by the sham philosophy, or the open hostility of our enemies to become disloyal to the good old faith of our Catholic forefathers, to the faith of the millions, we will make once more an act of faith and draw all the more closely to the Church of the Apostles, to the Church builded on the rock, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of peace. No, we have cast our lot with the millions, with the millions who have gone before, noble souls, who have found that Church the one haven of refuge in the hour of trial, the good mother in their sorrows, the kind safe, infallible guide to the true homeland in the hereafter.

37. THE LIBERTY OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD

One of the gifts that every normal person justly esteems is personal liberty. In fact, to judge from the praises of liberty by the poets, and the encomiums showered upon "the free man in a free country," there is nothing like independence, liberty, freedom.

It is true that personal freedom, and freedom

from unjust laws and tyrannical lawgivers is a priceless boon. It is well to sing the glory of a free country and the joy of independence. But is not the sacred cause of liberty sometimes extolled by those who are in reality slaves, slaves to sin and to their sinful selves? Is not the glorious term "freedom" often abused by men, who while glorying in freedom from physical compulsion, are yet held in a most abject slavery to vile passion?

Few phrases contain so much truth and deep wisdom, as the one which refers to those free from the foul taint of sin, as blessed with "the liberty of the children of God." They alone are really free and independent. They have conquered self and the allurements to sin and the maxims of a deceitful world. The latter holds no terror for them, it exercises no sway or sovereignty over them. Whereas the victims of sin, of the evil spirit and of the perfidious world are ever subject to influences which hold their souls in shameful captivity.

It is true that the victims of gross sin will not look upon themselves as slaves. They may even boast of their liberty, their freedom from the moral restraints which bind "the common herd." Yet none the less are they really slaves, held in a captivity

which dishonors the soul raised to the supernatural state and called to fellowship with Christ.

The just man on the other hand, that is, the man free from mortal or grievous sin, enjoys real liberty. He realizes the dignity that is his as a child of God and an heir of Heaven. Such a person is not a slave to every whim and caprice of passion. How different the state of sinners! Their senses and faculties are the slaves of sin. They have none of the rights and privileges of souls in the state of sanctifying grace. They know not the sweetness and the blessings of that heavenly freedom which has been secured for us by Christ, the Conqueror of sin.

Every Christian should therefore pray for victory over the might and tyranny of his predominant passion. We should resist beginnings and check the first impulses which gradually lead man into complete subjection to sin. What a sad spectacle to behold man made in the image of God, dominated, buffeted and beaten about by base passion and sinful desire! He, who was made a little less than the angels and was crowned with glory and honor, is now no longer real master of himself, but lies low in hideous thralldom. Truly there is no slavery so

wretched as that of sin, and no liberty so precious as that of the soul in the state of God's grace and friendship.

38. THE STORY OF THE PASSION

A saintly Dominican, who wrote a book of meditations on the Passion of our Divine Lord, dedicates his work "to all those whom God afflicts in mind or body." In these words we have one of the great lessons of the story of the Passion. It is intended to console, encourage and uplift us in the hour of suffering.

We may so regard the Passion of our Saviour, even though its first purpose was to redeem us from sin and to make sufficient reparation for man's transgression to the Eternal Father. This purpose is so intimately interwoven with every action of the private and public life of the Redeemer that we can scarcely ignore it. But we may fail to notice that the dark days of His Passion and Agony are also intended to be our hope and strength when pain and affliction overwhelm us.

The saints have told us how they had recourse to the wounds of our Saviour in the day of suffering. St. Gertrude and St. John of the Cross are

especially ardent in their exhortations to flee to the Cross of Christ when bitterness and sorrow seize upon us. Our Lord, in turn, impressed the marks of His sacred wounds upon those whom He chose to honor. No doubt, He wished to teach us that those who revere His sacred Passion, and have recourse to His Blessed Wounds, will be strengthened and comforted.

We read that the crucifix was "the favorite book" of some of the greatest saints. From it they learned patience and humility, and kindness and universal charity. And, indeed, how can that heart be turned against a brother which is daily strengthened by a devout glance at the blessed rood? In the great world-conflict which has set nation against nation, those dying on the field of battle have, in the strength of the Cross, forgiven their enemies, and turned with hope to their little crucifix. Of this we have authentic instances.

It is especially in the Passion that we see the immeasurable superiority of Christ to other so-called spiritual leaders. Christ not only taught a beautiful doctrine, but also showed by His own example how we are to bear up under physical suffering.

Not so Buddha or Confucius and the other reformers of whom we read in history.

What would we do without Holy Week, when the sublime story of the sufferings of the Saviour is told in all our churches? Then we realize so vividly that Christ indeed loved us to the end. Then we learn that "greater love than this no man hath than to give his life for his friend."

39. THE VALUE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

One of the much-used and much-abused phrases of our time — a phrase often in the mouths of those who like to rant about the rights of the modern man, is "the development of individuality." It seems that the "individual" to-day has certain privileges which were not known to the forefathers. Certain writers have become distinguished for what they pompously call their part in "the warfare for the liberation of humanity." Every man, and every woman too, is to recognize no higher law. Let every man be a law unto himself. The German dramatist Sudermann has written the praises of a heroine Magda, in a play called "Heimath," in which he lauds a silly and spiteful little creature,

whose sole claim to distinction rests on a furious craze for "developing her own individuality." And so there are other German writers who deal largely in glittering phrases about "der Werth der Persoenlichkeit," das eigene Ich, "Selbsbewusstsein," etc. ("The value of personality, one's own 'I,' consciousness of self.")

Alas! how readily those who follow the empty maxims of writers of this stripe come to grief. They will meet with rebuffs because there are others who over-prize their "personal self," who will tolerate no interference with "individual right" — and woe and contention and bitterness and secret pangs of jealousy and feelings of wounded pride and revenge then riot in the heart. How the haughty structure built of airy nothing has fallen into the dust!

But yet, there is a true dignity and majesty in every individual soul — a dignity and worth which are often forgotten by those ensnared by the empty prattling of a world without faith, of a world that has lost its true standards for judging moral and spiritual values. Does not the Psalmist say: "Thou hast made him (man) a little less than the angels, thou hast crowned him with glory and honor

and hast set him over the works of thy hands"?

Centuries later Saint Leo phrases the same beautiful ideas in an admonition which has rung down the ages: "*Agnosce Christiane, dignitatem tuam*" —"O Christian, know thy dignity." This exalted station and dignity of the individual, however, belong properly only to him, who having been baptized into the mystic Body of Christ, the Catholic Church, remains a friend of God, by keeping his soul untainted by the foul blot of serious sin. For in the state of sanctifying grace, the soul is really a child of God, an heir of heaven, and a partaker of all the blessings and graces purchased for us by the Precious Blood of the Saviour. And these privileges are extended to each individual Christian, —to the lowliest and humblest, as well as to those who fill the highest stations in society. It is only the possession of sanctifying grace which clothes the individual soul with lasting dignity and grandeur. Hence, no wonder that the Church of Christ has always had heroic workers and missionaries who gladly suffered untold privations to bring the sweet gospel of salvation to souls languishing in the valley and shadow of death. For these apostles truly recognized the value of the in-

dividual inasmuch as they understood the value of a soul in the eyes of God. They considered no labor too great in this duty of saving souls. It is, therefore, after all, only the Church of Christ which teaches the true value of the individual, since that value does not reside in external graces and accomplishments, much less in possession of gold and jewels, but in fellowship with Christ by the possession of charity, or in other words, of sanctifying grace.

Ye Christian men, who must at times listen to foolish assertions that the Catholic Church cripples the individual soul and places shackles upon individual development, and knows not the value of personality, go, tell these foolish speakers, to what lofty dignity even the child of the outcast and of the pauper may aspire in our Church. For that child baptized, and remaining in the state of baptismal innocence or sanctifying grace, is an object of perennial beauty in the sight of God. It is only from Christianity, and its doctrine of individual immortality, that we learn the inestimable value of the individual. If in all sorrows we look up to God, if in the hour of trial and in the hour of rejoicing, we never lose sight of eternity, if we ever live as

“witnesses of the Resurrection” and firmly hope in the Lord, we may trust to be with Him on that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ shall rise, and the chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the stars. And more than this, throughout the days of our weary pilgrimage we will ever be conscious of our individual dignity, as souls destined to share the eternal love and friendship of our God.

40 “WHITHER SHALL I FLY FROM THY
SPIRIT?”

A poet of our time, who has won a distinguished place in English literature, tells how a soul tries to flee away from God down “the long savannahs of the blue.” And yet the soul cannot escape the boundless presence and the limitless love of the Lord God.

The thought expressed in this now famous poem is not new. In the gray morning of antiquity the Psalmist brought home the same message in language of far surpassing strength and power and with a more universal appeal. For he wrote:

“Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into Heaven Thou art there: if I descend into hell Thou

art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there also shall Thy hand lead me: and Thy right hand shall hold me."

Battered and bruised by the oncoming of dour and sudden trial and suffering, the heart of man is tempted to fling away hope and to sink deep down into sullen despair. The wound may seem too dreadful for healing, the blow too cruel to find redress. And so the soul, once fast fixed in God, is tempted to flee "from the face of God" and to brood alone in silent gloom.

But like the whispering of an angel's voice there comes a message of hope: "Whither shalt thou flee from His face? God is there even in the depths of woe, He is with you even in the abyss of your desolation." God is and was with you through all those days which were filled with sorrow. He is nigh to you in those dark nights when grim despair threatens you. Nor is this empty consolation, nor the foolish talk of a false friend. For does not the Psalmist say: "Even there also shall Thy hand lead me: and Thy right hand shall hold me."

Truly consoling this thought that we cannot escape the benign presence of God, our Father. If

the chastising hand have been laid upon us, if the hurt still smart and burn, yet we may say with Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." It is our shortsightedness, our folly, or perhaps even our hidden selfishness, that causes us to take a false and one-sided view of the trial. Looked at in the larger and brighter light of faith, it will present another side. We may recognize that the blow was needed to remove dross from the soul, to strengthen a gradually weakening character, to bring home a much-needed lesson, to set us steadily and firmly upon that path that leadeth straight to the Master.

"Whither shall I fly from Thy spirit?" Shall these words not teach us the folly of seeking calm and peace away from God and the light of His countenance? For even when the palsied life drinks from cups of flame and seeks the company of the perverse — even then will He be nigh, but then it will be the thought of God's might and His oncoming justice. "If I descend into hell, Thou art present." Who then shall escape from God? These thoughts of the Psalmist, these thoughts concerning God's continual presence, will help the soul to lift herself occasionally to a vision of the City Celestial.

41. GOD'S PRESENCE

It is a great mistake to imagine that we perform God's will and that we are near to Him only in prayer, in attendance at church, or in the practice of pious devotions. A profound spiritual writer of our day has said: "Whatever may be the occupation which God demands of me, whatever may be the kind of work whereto His will calls me, even were the occupation the commonest, the work the roughest, God is there, because His Will is there. He is there, quite near, transparently clear behind a thin veil. The soul with dull eyes does not see Him, it only sees the material obligation, which occupies and arrests its looks. And when it desires to find Him, it turns elsewhere to see if it can find Him in a few devotional exercises. And there it does not find Him, since His will is not therein: His will is only to be found in the obligation that presses at the moment" ("The Interior Life," Edited by the Very Rev. Father Joseph Tissot).

These are certainly very encouraging reflections. It is frequently the thought "God sees me," "He is aware of my suffering and disappointment" that may exert a powerful, directive influence upon the

soul. At one time the thought of God's continual presence may check the beginnings of strong temptations; at another, it may give help when the spiritual combat is being hotly waged. Too often, indeed, it is the forgetfulness of God's presence that causes the soul to lose courage and to give way to the tempter or to abandon some good undertaking.

The recollection of God's continual presence will, therefore, be inspiring and helpful at all times and will produce manifold blessings. For this thought cannot but spur us on to do something for His glory, or in the cause of sweet charity. It will likewise put us on our guard against occasions of sin. When surrounded by the allurements of the world and beset by the clamorings of unruly desires, when we see so many others walking the easy way of sin, there are few thoughts apt to prove so strengthening as this: "God sees me and I am responsible to Him for all that I do."

But it is especially the consideration that God is with us and near us even in the performance of ordinary duty, as well as in prayer or in devotional practices, which gives us a deeper sense of the value of the duties of our state of life when they are performed with a good intention. The afore-men-

tioned spiritual writer says: "If the will of God is what I am seeking to know, what I am attaching myself to, and what I strive to follow, I find it always great, always perfect, always like itself, always holy and adorable. It matters little whether it be in important matters or in small details, in dispositions which are irksome to me or are agreeable to me; as for me, it is always the same will that I am looking for, the same will that I find, and the same will that I carry out." Hence it is not proper to make piety consist entirely in the practice of favorite spiritual devotions. For this may be seeking our own will rather than God's will. The person who remembers that God may be served in humble work, who is mindful that God is ever present with, and coöperating with him, while performing his daily duties throughout the long run of a dreary day, will not imagine that God is honored only by prayer and by devotional practices. Such a one gladly takes up the work of the day, and with pure intention labors for the Lord, though he be engaged in tasks that seem of little value.

Many so-called "uplift" and "inspiration" books have been published of late years. They preach a healthy optimism, telling us to take joy and

to find cheer in our daily duties, and, no doubt, they do some good in bringing home to people the excellence of steadfast attention to our every-day obligations. But scarcely one of these books ever lays stress on the great truth here pointed out — that our daily work is God's work if it be done with pure intention and if it be not opposed to any of His commandments. How happy we may be in this thought — that whether we work or whether we pray, God is with us and near us. We need not go far to find him. The advice of the apostle: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. Ch. 10, V. 31), bears a precious message to those who have learned to see and to seek God in all things. They are like the children of God to whom St. John refers: "who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God."

42. PEACE OF MIND

One of the greatest blessings that can enrich man is peace of mind. It is often the fruit of loyal and continuous service of God and of devotion to His cause. It is frequently the reward of some act of charity, and it also may result from the conscious-

ness that we are trying to fulfill, as well as we can, the particular duties of our state of life.

We must bear in mind, however, that peace of mind and quiet of heart are not always the portion of God's most devoted servants here on earth. Quite the contrary may be the case. We know that some of the most heroic souls, those who have worn themselves out in the service of God or their neighbor, or have been conspicuous for observance of rule in some religious community, have also had days filled with sorrows and suffered through long nights of affliction. Great interior trials darkened their path and temptations worried and accompanied them like a malicious shadow. Thus St. Catherine of Siena tells us that she was harassed by distressing temptations which dragged her soul into the depths of darkest fear. Similar confessions have been made by other saints of God and heroes of sanctity.

In such cases the safest remedy is to keep up one's hope and to try and cultivate a spirit of resignation and even of interior joy. For such trials and temptations, even if long-continued and supremely annoying, are not a sign that the soul is displeasing to God or that it is to be excluded forever from the

sweet sunshine of His love and peace. But there are other sources of interior worry and fret and bitterness of soul. These are found within ourselves. They are the "little foxes" that slip into the heart, that banish peace, that rob us of merit, that bring on feelings of anger and envy and revenge, that lead to harsh words, that spread gloom and discontent where there should be joy and happiness and sunshine. It is certainly worth while to discover the lair of such insidious enemies of peace of mind and joy of soul.

How appropriately in the language of the Catechism certain more grievous, and unfortunately, very common sins and failings, are called "capital sins"—capital, because they are the source and root and well-spring of ever so many other transgressions—great and small! Perhaps a cursory examination of some of these capital vices, from the viewpoint of their minor results, will help us, in the language of the Canticles, to "catch the little foxes that destroy the vines," and that carry worry and sour disappointment into our lives.

The first great sin, the sin that often sows sorrow and discontent in the heart that is guilty of it, is pride. How much hidden worry and foolish disap-

pointment and sore affliction may not be traced to this one sin! The proud can know no peace. At least not long will all be well with the proud heart, with the conceited mind. For suddenly there arises an occasion when some slight concession is to be made to the will or opinion of others, some circumstance presents itself which calls for a little sacrifice of self-love — and lo! the person is not equal to the emergency. Pride rebels, pride refuses to see things except from one little narrow, self-centered point of view. And how quickly restlessness settles upon the heart, and how suddenly equanimity and poise are disturbed! Has pride perhaps been the reason why you suffer from long spells of secret sullenness, or has this sin despoiled you of cheerfulness?

Equally baneful as a destroyer of peace of mind is ill-regulated attachment to worldly goods, to money, to possessions. This means to be a slave of the sin of avarice. And how can he who inordinately covets and craves for gold and great riches find lasting peace of mind? The demon of avarice will torment him. The "Lust of the Eyes," as Scripture calls the hankering after much wealth, the "accursed greed of gold" has brought dire woe and misery upon many a soul and into many a house-

hold. In its wake follow discontent and useless strivings, and thwarted ambition and heartache. Well may he from whom peace has departed, and into whose abode has entered the spirit of discontent, ask himself: "Has the second of the capital sins wrested from me a pearl beyond price, a possession more comforting than gold and silver — peace and quiet of mind?"

Still more inimical to the possession of peace of soul is that terrible evil which Scripture calls "the lust of the flesh." For not only the grosser sins of sensuality put to flight the spirit of sweet peace, but even the inordinate seeking of one's bodily ease and comfort at any cost, may be responsible for the throng of unruly desires that invade the heart and banish therefrom what formerly it prized so greatly — the consciousness of being at peace with God. Now where the foul serpent of sensuality has once fastened its poisonous sting, there peace will be unknown and tumultuous restlessness and soul-destroying agencies will enter in. "Abandon ye all hope who enter here"; so read the great seer Dante, as he came to the gates of hell. The words apply especially to those who have fallen victims to the base and debasing vices of the flesh. In vain

will they seek refuge from the demon that has fastened upon their souls. Let such have recourse to the cleansing Sacrament of Penance. After they be shriven clean, after they have purified the dark chambers of the heart—perhaps they may find again that peace which once was theirs.

Envy—the very name spells uneasiness of mind, —pallid cheeks, vain, thwarted hopes and ambitions. Has this Capital Sin found a place in your heart? Then for you there will be no more peace. First cast out this unruly demon. Rather rejoice at the good fortune of your brother than be envious thereat, and then may peace spread her wings once more over your troubled heart.

These reflections show the truth and perennial beauty of that Scriptural phrase which refers to the just as being free with the liberty of the children of God. Those, on the other hand, who cover their souls with sin are not free. They are slaves to self, to the Evil Spirit, to sinful passion. And as long as they languish in such thralldom, they shall know no peace nor shall their hearts be comforted with the spiritual gladness which encourages those who walk the way of God's commandments. But casting out sin, you pave the way for peace.

43. THE QUEST OF HAPPINESS

The child, the youth, the man with the weight of years upon him, seek happiness. At certain periods of the year, at certain anniversaries, men seem best able to express their feelings by wishing one another more happiness, greater joy. Even as we go along unconsciously through our day's duties, instinctively that craving for happiness guides us. It causes us to avoid things that make for permanent discomfort, to seek things that make for ultimate joy.

And it is right and proper to follow this desire for soul-satisfying happiness — that is, to seek happiness in a manner becoming a rational creature and one destined ultimately for fellowship with the saints in the Kingdom of God. The saints sought this happiness — and found it. The sinner seeks it — he is contended for a while; but alas! soon the forbidden fruit turns to ashes in his mouth, and he finds out that the work of iniquity is more bitter than gall and wormwood.

Hedged in by the paths followed respectively by the great saint and the great sinner on their quest for happiness, there are countless other paths, and

all of them are traveled by weary mortals in search of the same great boon — happiness. And those who plod along these myriad paths are all only more or less successful. We see many a puzzled wanderer turning aside from one way to try another, but always his quest is the same — happiness. Some there are like Galahad and Percival, who follow the gleam of the Grail, o'er "lonely mountain meres" and up the rugged, barren heights — and are rewarded in the end. They are blessed with the vision of the Grail, chiefly because "they ever wore the white flower of a blameless life." Others there are — so many of them, who like Lancelot and Guinevere, bravely set out upon the same quest — the vision of the Grail and the attainment of happiness — but are not successful.

Nor is it only the heroes and heroines of poet-lore who illustrate for us this quest of happiness. Not only of old did youths and maidens, and sire and son set out with high hope of obtaining their hearts' desires, but even to-day we behold the same ceaseless striving of the children of men for the phantom happiness. As of old, they set forth with the same aspirations, with the same eager desire to arrive at the coveted goal of unalloyed joy. But

how many to-day are not foiled in their eager search! How many like Lancelot meet with sore disappointment and have nothing but shame and lasting remorse for their ceaseless striving? Alas, that man will not learn from his forebears, both from those who have been successful and from those who have failed, how to arrive at lasting joy and contentment.

Seeing the utter hopelessness of finding what they desire, some are apt to become discouraged and to sink back in utter weariness and to murmur against God. He has given us, they say, this desire for perfect peace, but has not provided us with the means for its realization. They forget that even of old, the great preacher Solomon pointed out the path to true wisdom and together with it the path to lasting joy. He first sought joy and comfort in created things. "I made me great works, I built me houses, and planted vineyards. I made gardens and orchards, and set them with trees of all kinds; I heaped together for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces; and when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labors wherein I had labored in vain, I saw in all things vanity, and vexation of

mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun." But at the end of his book he reached the conclusion: "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is all man."

Not so strange is it, therefore, that centuries afterwards another famous preacher, seeking the way to lasting joy, should have written in his memorable confessions: "Thou hast made us for Thee, O God, and our hearts rest not until they find Thee." So wrote Augustine, the learned Doctor of the Church, who pursued the phantom happiness in devious ways and along crooked paths — and finally found what his heart so earnestly desired, not in the sinful pursuit of the things of time and in the vanities of life, but in the earnest service of God which holds out the firm hope of a blissful immortality.

The same restless striving for more joy is going on to-day. But strange, that in spite of so many additional creature-comforts within the reach of the multitudes, there should be such unhappiness, such dark pessimism, such discontent with life. Why the many suicides, the broken hopes, the blighted lives, the ruined families, hearts prematurely robbed of the joy of youth? Is it not because men and

women, young and old, seek happiness there where it cannot be found?

Let us learn from Solomon and Augustine, from the wise men of all times and from our experience, that it were idle to seek lasting joy from creatures, especially from the sinful use of creatures. These should be unto us, not stumbling-blocks to our salvation, but stepping-stones to sanctity. For not in the abundance of earthly things, not in gold and silver, not in bodily comforts and passing vanities, will be found the secret of true joy, but in a loyal, faithful service of God, in the consciousness that from day to day we are becoming more worthy of Him, Who one day will be our reward and our joy exceeding great.

44. THE WORLD

We are told so often that we must hate the world, that we must detest its manner, flee its abominations, and not accept its principles. This seems to many a hard saying. Like the disciples some may be tempted to say: "This saying is hard and who can hear it?"

Let us then try to realize the meaning of these counsels. The world, in the first place, or rather

the spirit of the world, is ever opposed to Christ and His teachings. The worldly spirit tempts its followers to love entirely different pursuits and ideals than those taught by Christ and His Church. Hence the world is opposed to the Church. The world again is not of God, nor does it know Christ. (St. John xvii, 27). The aim of the world is fixed upon, and circumscribed by, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. A man entirely steeped in the worldly spirit, therefore, casts out of his heart allegiance to Christ. For he who is not with Him is against Him. This world ever hates Christ and His Church. Witness what has happened in some countries to-day.

The prince and leader of the world, understood in this sense, is Satan himself. He arrays the world in constant combat against Christ, and leads in the age-long attack of the forces of the world upon the citadel of the Church. St. John refers to the evil spirit as the "prince of this world." He also tells us that "he will be cast out," i.e., that in the final combat Christ and His Church will vanquish the world and the forces of evil.

And lest we be considered too severe in this judgment on the world, we may recall the words of

the Master. During the last sublime discourse to His disciples, He prays to the Father as follows: "They are not of the world, as I also am not of the world." And again, He solemnly says: "I pray not for the world but for them whom Thou hast given Me."

It is, therefore, on the words and conduct of our Divine Master, that we base our enmity towards the world and its spirit, which is and will always remain opposed to the spirit of the humble Christ. And do you ask what is that worldly spirit, which we are commanded to look upon as the great enemy in the religious life of to-day? Why, it is in evidence everywhere about you. It is working openly and secretly, boldly and insidiously, to draw away souls made to the image of God, from the love and service and friendship of God. Its helpmates are legion. The world has recruited them from out of the ranks of the powerful and the lowly, the wise and the ignorant, the cultured and the plebeian. It knows how to adopt its means to its one fell purpose — to draw away mankind — yea, the whole race of man, from the service of God. Culture and progress, systems of education, the influence of literature and the press, the power of diplomacy and

the eloquence of misguided minds, all these has the world secured to wage its bitter war against Christ and His Church. A world-combat has begun. It began long ago, centuries ago, it began when Christ, the typical enemy of the world, and the grand leader in the combat against its power, hung on the rood of Calvary. But beside Him on the cross there was a malefactor on His right hand, another on His left. The one reviled Him, the other prayed for mercy and forgiveness and pardon of sin.

And so, to-day, there are two camps, two armies, contending the one against the other. The one army is made up of that vast number of souls who through their own fault, through lives stained by grievous, unrepented, and unforgiven sin, have lost their privilege to be called the children of God. Their lot is with Satan, with the world, with the enemies of Christ. Not content with their own wretched plight, they seek to draw others under the standard of Lucifer, the prince of the world. The other army has remained loyal to Christ, His cause, to the voice of conscience, to the whisperings of grace, to the gentle guidance of His infallible Church. Many of them may have sinned occasion-

ally in the sight of their God. But they repented them of their faults, and in the Sacrament of Penance they sought the strength and the virtues to take up with new courage the combat against the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life — the combat against the world. They were never confirmed in their aversion to God. Their allegiance to Satan and to the world was broken, when with the grace of God and by virtue of the sacraments, they left the land of bondage and came back to their Father's house.

Yet in this never-ceasing conflict which we all must wage against the world and its spirit, we need not fear. For we are clothed with power and protection from on high. Daily the prayer for victory ascends to God — after every holy Mass — offered to the God of Might in all lands of Christendom. And that prayer will be heard. The combat against the world, against the powers of darkness and the hosts of error will continue to the end of time. But in the end we, the children of the Church, all those who have combated this world and remained steadfast in the ways and in the commandments of God, shall win. For we have the infallible words of our infallible leader in this con-

test against the powers of evil. We remember the words of Christ: "I have overcome the world." And protected by Him, and aided by the saving grace of His Holy Church, we know no fear. Our victory is assured.

45. SERVITUDE TO THE WORLD

In his novel entitled "*La Voie Sans Retour*," M. Henri Bordeaux, describing characters at the famous gambling resort, Monte Carlo, has a few lines whose truth will be recognized by all those who have a little experience of life. Referring to the crowd of men and women seated at the card-tables, a spectator asks his companion: "Have you ever noticed in people who work this same tense and dreadful anxiety? If all these idlers had to gain their bread in the sweat of their brow, you would not see them wearing so woeful an expression."

The speaker here, without being aware of it, uttered a saying of great significance. It has a much wider meaning than he wished to convey. It is almost universally true that those who give themselves, heart and soul, to the pursuit of vain ambitions, to the sinful conquest of things of time and sense, must sooner or later pay the bitter penalty.

For those things do not and cannot pave the way to lasting peace and contentment. They rather promote "a tense and dreadful anxiety." In fact, the speaker really expressed an old truth in a new way — that the reward of world-service is oppression of spirit and a heart never at rest.

How many individual instances do we not all know which bear out this assertion. Our daily papers present us numberless examples. We there read of the vain strivings of worldly-minded, sinful men and women, whose one desire is to win the empty prizes of the world — wealth, or high office or some social distinction. But others there are who seek to thwart them in their plots and ambitions. The path to high social eminence and to great wealth is often strewn with blighted lives and broken hopes. How few there are who attain to the height of their ambitions? And even if they win the empty honor, the social eminence, how quickly they may be cast down to become the sport of the mocking multitude? Truly he whose heart is caught in servitude to the world shall know no lasting joy. There is no slavery so vile and so abject as slavery to the world, to its fickle principles and to its frivolous demands. Let not your heart become entangled in this serfdom

and never become a victim of that most tyrannical taskmaster — the world.

46. THE VISION OF IMMORTALITY

It is no mere coincidence that the greatest singers of all times have developed in their best works themes which momentarily lift the veil hiding the hereafter and thus afford a vision of immortality. The inspired poet, Dante, the most eloquent interpreter of man's longing for immortal life, owes his world-wide fame to a work which pierces the bournes of sense and time and lifts our vision to the eternal throne of God. Parzifal, the youthful hero of the poem by the greatest of the mediæval court-singers of Germany, goes through life on an ideal quest — the quest of the Holy Grail, the symbol of the immortal longing in the heart of men for the blessed vision of God in the eternal home-land.

Even Goethe, a singer who had practically broken with the Christian world-view, was forced to seek the theme of his life and master-work "Faust," in the Christian teaching concerning the future life. For after the unfortunate Faust had lived through a tumultuous riot of sensual indulgence in the first part of the poem, without finding the peace for

which he craved, Goethe allows that temptation-tossed soul to find rest in the hereafter. We may perhaps quarrel with the German poet for passing his hero through the gates eternal leading to soul-satisfying peace, without previous contrition and repentance for gross sin and depravity. But this much is certain — the transcendant world-view of the devout Christian must have impressed him powerfully. Otherwise he could not have taken thence the elements for the final scenes of that poem, which is said to contain his principal message to the century.

In the "Idyls of the King," Tennyson allows the much-suffering, heroic ruler to depart not to a place of transitory bliss, but, because the king "ever wore the white flower of a blameless life"—he departs

"To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea."

to live an immortal life with those who have been faithful to God, to duty and to the still, small voice of conscience.

Calderon, the most renowned of Spain's dramatic poets, points in his masterpiece "The Steadfast Prince," from the countless graves in the city of the dead, to the everlasting homes of redeemed souls in the city lighted by God's countenance.

The great poets are loath to part company with their heroes when fate overtakes them. These heroic souls, the poets say, "shall come again to rule once more." For they are not dead, or rather being dead, "they still live." Hence we find that the illustrious heroes, especially those distinguished for well-doing,—Arthur of the Round Table, Beowulf, the hero of the Old-English epic, Emperor Frederic Barbarossa, and even Hiawatha, the benefactor of the American Indians, are not dead, but they will come once again to lead their people to light and blessed peace and immortal glory.

Without Christ, without the resurrection of Christ, Dante could not have written his "Divina Comedia," nor Calderon his "Steadfast Prince," nor Goethe his "Faust."

What the boldest imagination of the most gifted poet could only dimly conceive, this Christ, the risen Lord, has made a certainty by His Resurrection and Ascension. The most majestic and most touch-

ing tragedy is the one enacted on Calvary. It surpasses in splendor and dignity the tragic creations of the most renowned poets. What is the "Divine Comedy" compared to the true Resurrection of Christ to everlasting glory? It is but the stammering and the halting speech of the child. What is Raphael's "Transfiguration of Christ," this richly-colored canvas, compared with the true joy of Heaven? What is Wagner's soul-stirring music compared to the harmonies of the city eternal? What all the passing beauty and transitory splendor of earth, when estimated "*sub specie aeternitatis*"—from the standpoint of the glory that passeth not away, of that joy which no ear hath heard, no eye hath seen,—promised to the lowliest follower of Christ, the Saviour?

IV. THOUGHTS FOR ALL TIMES

47. LADY POVERTY

One of the most amiable saints of the thirteenth century, Francis de Assisi, chose the Lady Poverty as his spiritual bride. The "Poverello," the "poor little man," as his townsmen called him, freely stripped himself of his goods, and they were many — for his father was a rich merchant — in order to serve his needy brethren, Christ's poor, in greater humility and simplicity of heart. Francis well knew that poverty and humility of spirit frequently brought down the blessings of Heaven. For hath not the Master said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven?" He knew, too, that if he remained poor himself, he would tire less easily of serving the poverty-stricken brethren. Nay more, he knew that then he would even be ready to go begging in order to supply their wants.

Like Saint Francis, other great heroes of God and servants of His poor, chose "Lady Poverty" as their companion and guide in service of their

needy brethren. Among them are Vincent de Paul, Peter Claver, St. John de Matha, and many others who achieved great results and brought untold blessings to the wretched and the forsaken because they themselves experienced poverty and could, therefore, feel deeper sympathy with the needy, the outcast and the afflicted in body and mind. Those who had the good things of this world, gladly gave of their abundance to these apostles of the poor; for they knew that alms bestowed upon such ministers never failed to reach those who were in need and who suffered.

But the whole world to-day shrinks from poverty as if it were the one great evil, the one calamity, the one disgrace, as if it were a distressing and loathsome plague. To accumulate wealth, to satisfy every desire — these seem to be the main objects of many persons' ambition. The "*auri sacra fames*," the accursed greed for gold, has brought ruin and desolation into many a life. And yet the praise of "voluntarily accepted poverty" has been sounded even in our day by a man whose world-view is not that of a devout Catholic — Professor William James, the former Harvard professor of Philosophy. He writes:

“Poverty indeed is the strenuous life — without brass bands or uniforms or hysteric popular applause or lies or circumlocutions; and when one sees the way in which wealth-getting enters as an ideal into the very bone and marrow of our generation, one wonders whether a revival of the belief that poverty is a worthy religious vocation may not be ‘the transformation of military courage,’ and the spiritual reform which our time stands most in need of.

“Among us English-speaking peoples especially do the praises of poverty need once more to be boldly sung. We have grown literally afraid to be poor. We despise any one who elects to be poor in order to simplify and save his inner life. If he does not join the general scramble and pant with the money-making street, we deem him spiritless and lacking in ambition. We have lost the power of imagining what the ancient idealization of poverty could have meant; the liberation from material attachments, the unbribed soul, the manlier indifference, the paying our way by what we are or do and not by what we have, the right to fling away our life at any moment irresponsible — the more athletic trim, in short, the moral fighting shape. When we

of the so-called better classes are scared as men were never scared in history at material ugliness and hardship; when we put off marriage until our houses can be artistic, and quake at the thought of having a child without a bank-account and doomed to manual labor, it is time for thinking men to protest against so unmanly and irreligious a state of opinion."

Miss Repplier, too, in a recent essay, "Our Lady Poverty," reminds us of the great things that have been done under stress of poverty, and speaks of the inspiration begotten of reduced circumstances.

Poverty, then, despite all the teachings of so-called social "uplifters" and pink-tea sociologists, is in itself not disgraceful nor is it a barrier to success in the attainment of the higher good — peace of mind and serene contentment. We may not be called upon to espouse Lady Poverty like Francis de Assisi and many other heroes of the higher life. But we can, no doubt, secure part of the expansive joy that ever abode in the Poverello's heart by being poor in spirit, and by not allowing the passing things of sense to occupy our minds and hearts to the exclusion of the higher and nobler interests of the soul.

48. FOR GREATER THINGS

Thrown into the midst of a busy and active life as most of us are, we are beset by maxims and watchwords, telling us to make the most of our days. Under our eyes are thrust the slogans: "Be good to yourself," and "Do it now," "Don't worry," "Just smile," and "Every man a king." These and many similar suggestions contain, no doubt, an appeal to the energy, good will and courage latent in most hearts. They may help us to overcome certain obstacles. But they fall short of being applicable at all times, under all circumstances, under stress as well as when fortune smiles, in all places, and for every possible sphere of human endeavor.

The Saints, too, those brave men and women who ever looked forward to a better and brighter land, whose desires and ideals soared upward, though their feet were firmly planted upon the earth, have left us maxims making for joy and success and for encouragement to do our best during the pilgrimage of years. One of the sainted men of old told his fellowmen, "Remember, O Christian, thy dignity." Ignatius Loyola chose for a daily reminder these

words, "For the greater glory of God." St. Benedict taught his disciples the value of these telling words, "Work and pray." Francis of Assisi and Philip Neri invited their townspeople to "Be joyful"—to be glad in the service of the Lord. St. Stanislaus Kostka, a Polish youth, brought up in the splendor of the palace, when invited to take part in the passing show and glitter of court life, quietly replied, "I have been born for greater things."

The worldling will be tempted to smile at the response of the generous young man who had resolved to dedicate his life to the service of God. He will perhaps pity him for not placing due value upon the opportunities, so freely offered him, for sharing in princely splendor and amusements. Yet, estimating that response and the life of sanctity which it inspired, from the standpoint of values that endure, who will say that Stanislaus chose foolishly? Who will assert that he forsook the better part, and that he turned to things of lesser moment? To-day Stanislaus is known and rightly honored in the Church as a youth, who in a few years arrived at the full stature of heroic sanctity. For to him have been well applied the words of Holy Writ: "Having

been made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time."

We are perhaps not called upon to make that heroic sacrifice of all earthly hopes and comforts which was made by this saint. Yet his maxim — I have been born for greater things — may be chosen by young and old, by those of the world and those in the cloister, by rich and poor, as a valiant help in the hour of trial, as a gentle reminder that though earthly success be far away, yet an eternal crown is close at hand. It is won by faithful coöperation with the grace of God given to every one of us, by brave, cheerful surrender to His will in all things, by carrying the burden of work and duty laid upon us in the spirit of the Divine Master.

49. WEEPING OVER JERUSALEM

In the nineteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel we read the touching scene of the Master's drawing nigh to the Holy City of Jerusalem and weeping over it, saying: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes." He deplored the coming destruction of its lordly dwellings, its treasures, its works of art. "Thy enemies shall

cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straighten thee on every side.”

Here the Lord bemoans the fate of a city built of stone and mortar — a material structure. How often must not that same gracious Master weep over the ruin of something much more costly than a pile of earthly materials — the ruin of man’s immortal soul! By mortal sin the soul is laid waste, death enters in, man is robbed of the sanctifying grace of his Saviour; he becomes a worthless tree; he can no longer merit for life eternal. He becomes a slave to his own sinful self, or to shameful passion, to a mocking, deceitful world, to Satan, the enemy of all men. In the state of mortal sin man is frequently deprived of peace of mind, of quiet of soul, unless indeed he be so sorely steeped in grievous sin that it can be said of him, as was written of the haughty king of old: “*Induratum erat cor Pharaonis*” — Pharaoh’s heart was hardened. Our faith teaches us that were man to die in the state of unrepented, unforgiven sin, he would be eternally lost.

If all these evil results follow from mortal sin — and they are only a few of its disastrous effects — surely the gracious Saviour of man must often

weep over the ruin of that which He prized so highly, of that soul, which he came upon earth to strengthen, to uplift, to sanctify, and to make worthy to remain the eternal dwelling of the Holy Spirit. The soul may well be compared to a precious dwelling, to an abode more regal and magnificent than any that graced the Holy City of Jerusalem. If the destruction of the material city gave pain to the loving heart of the God-man, what anguish and woe must be inflicted upon His Sacred Heart, by souls once precious, now steeped in hideous sin? "Know thou, and see, that it is an evil thing to have left the Lord, thy God."

Many a Catholic youth sets out bravely in the morning of life with high hope and lofty resolve never to leave the Lord, his God, by the commission of foul and grievous sin! But alas! soon robber passions attack him, perhaps less virtuous companions give him an outlook into a land where hang the shadows of death and where blossoms the fruit of eternal remorse. In a dark hour he enters upon the primrose path leading farther into that deceptive country, and like the son in the parable of the Prodigal, he is soon forced to feed upon the husks of swine. He has left the Lord, his God. He now

knows no peace of soul and the fruit which once seemed to him so sweet and fair, has become bitter to his taste. Perhaps he has drunk deeply of cups of flame and restless, sinful desires of the heart, which was once the abode of heavenly peace, now drive him farther and farther from the light and love of God's countenance. And during all this time his Saviour weeps — weeps over the ruin, the destruction of a precious soul, destined for a mansion in the city of eternal peace.

“And thy enemies shall beat thee flat to the ground.” Thus prophesied the Redeemer when in vision He foresaw the woes that were to fall upon the city. So, too, does sin with its fearful consequences cast man from the high station which once was his when a child of God, in the state of sanctifying grace. And while the sinner goes about with anguish and remorse in his heart, while he stains his soul ever more with that one great evil, serious sin, the Saviour weeps. Have we perhaps been guilty of that great evil? Have we turned away from the Lord, our God? Have we added to the insults that afflict the Divine Heart of the Saviour? Then let us during these days listen to the still, small voice, pleading for a return to the Father's

house. We can turn the Saviour's sorrow into joy only by sincere repentance. And that peace which once was the portion of the soul will again take up its dwelling in the heart. For only by this contrite return to grace and to forgiveness, do you show that you have known "the things that are to thy peace."

50. WHAT IS WORTH WHILE?

We are often told to reflect on the swiftness with which things of sense and time pass away, and not to attach our hearts to pursuits which serve only to satisfy the fancy of the idle hour. We are bid to lay hold of things worth while and to lay up treasures in an abiding land, treasures which neither the moth can consume nor the thief carry away.

A precious teaching this, but, also, so little heeded in this strenuous age! We go down some evening to one of the crowded corners of our city streets — and what a rush and hubbub there greets the eye! People of all classes, especially the young, and the giddy and the frivolous seekers of pleasure are there, all apparently in quest of something, bent on attaining something which apparently they sorely need. It is excitement, distraction, the life of the senses which have seized upon them and for the

time being carried them away. Restlessness and confusion are written on many a face in that eager throng.

Such a life long-continued meets with its natural penalty. Doctors say that nervous troubles are increasing and there are many premature breakdowns. The vitality and resisting power of the race are very much in danger of being impaired. Frail bodies cannot endure the demands made upon them by this ceaseless craze for sense distractions, and give way long before their time.

What is one reason why so many people fall victims to this great modern evil and so readily join the flock which rushes day after day, and night after night, in quest of something new in the line of distraction? They have forgotten what is really worth while. Measured from the standpoint of eternal things, "*sub specie aeternitatis*," their strivings and quests and ambitions are vain and useless. They are like those beating the air. They are like children led on by a will-o-the-wisp over a smiling meadow to ruin.

It were well for such persons to ask themselves occasionally the question: "What does it all mean?" "What is all this for eternity?" In the

eternal years towards which we are all going there is not this rush and tumult. Why fasten our hearts to interests and distractions which we cannot take with us to the life of eternity? We may also drop worry and discontent, and selfishness and conceit over past success — for all these avail us nothing. We cannot take them with us to the eternal abode.

Let us try to find out what things are worth while. They are precisely the things and qualities we may take with us to the eternal life. Let us take hold of the grace of God and continually try to live in the state of grace. Let us esteem work and the spirit of service. These things may avail us in eternity. Friendship, too, with those who love God and take joy in His service, is worth while and may avail to the eternal life. For it may help to an esteem of interests which are worth while and which may be continued in a more perfect manner in the eternal years.

51. THE TESTIMONY OF THOSE WITHOUT

The Church is frequently compared to a kingdom. Those of us who have been admitted into it by the Holy Sacrament of Baptism, who have accepted its teachings, and have ever remained faith-

ful to the pledges made when we received that first and most necessary sacrament may rightly be called children of this kingdom, which is the Church of Christ. Those who have not had the privilege of being incorporated by Baptism and by faith into this great Communion, may be said to linger outside the walls. Some of them often cast wistful glances at those within. For they behold the benefits and graces that are the share of those who, in the words of St. Peter, constitute a kingly priesthood and a chosen generation.

They who are without the walls, though deprived of the helps and enlightenment of those who participate in the spiritual riches of the kingdom, are sometimes ready to give testimony to the strength and efficiency and beauty and splendor of the organization which they behold only from afar. We intend to offer some of this testimony in the present paper.

A modern non-Catholic writer, from whose essays and critical studies it would be easy to collect quite an anthology of opinions and judgments in defense of Catholic truth and teaching, is the late Professor H. T. Peck. Concluding an essay on Huysmans in his book "The Personal Equation,"

this essayist speaks of the power and ability of the Catholic Church to meet all the spiritual needs of men at the present time. He refers to the great privilege which Catholics have in their recourse to the Sacrament of Penance. He writes:

“To those of us who are Protestants the book (Huysman's “*En Route*”) is full of deep instruction in revealing with startling force the secret of the power of that wonderful religious organization which has made provision for the needs of every human soul, whether it requires for its comfort active service or the mystical life of contemplation. We see how every want is understood and how for every spiritual problem an answer is provided; how the experience of twenty centuries has been stored up and recorded, and how all that man has ever known, is known to those who guide and perpetuate this mighty system. And in these days when Doctors of Divinity devote their energies to nibbling away the foundations of historic faith, and when the sharpest weapons of antagonism are forged on theological anvils, there is something reassuring in the contemplation of the one great Church that does not change from age to age, that stands unshaken on the rock of its conviction, and that speaks to

the wavering and troubled soul, in the serene and lofty accents of divine authority."

The late Dr. Harper, of the University of Chicago, has given us some strong testimony regarding the system of teaching which has ever been in vogue in our schools. We are sometimes accused of laying too much stress on religious training of youth. We are advised not to spend too much time on Catechism. We are told that too much teaching of religion may even work harm. But here is the conclusion reached by Dr. Harper after long years of study of our educational systems and of what they have accomplished for the moral uplift of the youth of the land. The quotation is taken from his well-known work "The Trend in Higher Education" (page 224):

"The seminary student must study and know the public school system and must supplement that system. *It is difficult to foretell the outcome of another fifty years of our educational system* — a system which trains the mind, but for the most part, leaves the moral side untouched; no religion, no ethics, merely a sharpening of the intellect. The Roman Catholics meet this difficulty; our Protestant churches seem utterly to ignore it. A blind faith

that the Sunday school will do what the public schools do not do, leads us to lose sight of a peril as deadly as any that confronts us."

As regards social service it is sometimes suggested that it be carried on entirely independent of the Church. In other words, some persons narrow social service work down to mere humanitarian work and overlook the divine element of charity which should accompany acts of well-doing towards our neighbor. In the Catholic Church supernatural love or charity has always been a powerful incentive urging on her children to acts of mercy and helpfulness and benevolence. The same authority just quoted justifies the close association of charitable work with religion. He writes in the work already alluded to: "Let us teach, too, that the Church through its ministers should, therefore, take up any and all agencies which make for the betterment of mankind. Jesus was a healer of the body as well as of the soul. The multitude of outside agencies now engaged in humanitarian work are sucking the very life-blood of the Church. *Here, again, the Roman Catholics have shown a greater wisdom than the Protestants;* for with them these

agencies are, in nearly every case, those of the Church."

While the Church thus encourages social work and insists on a religious basis, it does not go to the other extreme of identifying its mission with the mere material uplift of the poor and those in need. Many of those outside the Church find an element of strength precisely in this fidelity in adhering to her one great divine mission—the salvation of immortal souls. Thus William Lyon Phelps, head of the English department of Yale, several months ago, made these statements which certainly contain a large element of truth:

"The main difficulty with the church to-day is that the people in the pews do not have the gospel preached to them. The hungry sheep look up and are not fed. *The tremendous strength of the Roman Catholic Church lies in its fidelity to principle*, in its religious vitality and in its hatred of compromise. It should be an object lesson to all Protestant ministers. They ought to learn that the chief duty of a preacher is to hold forth Christianity and not discourse on sanitation, political economy and literature."

Finally a word as to the social value of religious orders of men and women and of monastic communities. It is one of the stale and traditional accusations against us that some of our institutions are distinctly "unsocial" and contribute little to the general progress and welfare of society. "The monks" and their monasteries are often cited as glaring examples. But one of the latest and most advanced sociologists of our country, a non-Catholic, Dr. R. Fulton Cutting, of New York, in his recent work "The Church and Society" (New York, The Macmillan Co., pp. 5, 6, 7), says:

"The Church's contribution to civilization in the past has been immeasurable. In the Middle Ages the monasteries were the refuges to which flocked the poor, the suffering, the widow and the orphan. In fact, all who were oppressed found within their walls a refuge. . . . *The Church, through her religious orders, was the educator of Society.* It was they who first practiced scientific farming. They were the road builders of the Dark Ages, the drainers of swamps and fens, the patrons of architecture and painting, and they supplied at the same time, in their own organizations, the object lesson of a model society."

52. SOUL CULTURE

Year after year we behold the phenomena of growth in nature round about us. There is a constant process of change in the world of vegetation. Man placed in the midst of this wonderful manifestation of life likewise grows and changes. He is subject to the same inevitable law.

But how often, alas, man grows only in body and mind in the progress of the years. For many there are who starve their souls, though there are so many opportunities held out to them for strengthening the life of the soul, for the practice of all kinds of virtue, for rising to the full stature of heroic sanctity. But thousands and thousands allow the treasure of sanctifying grace, which was infused into their souls in Baptism, to remain unproductive as regards larger and more beautiful fruits of holiness.

And yet we have the direct and earnest invitation of our Divine Lord ever to increase in soul-power. This invitation means we should strive ever to become more fit for the eternal homeland of heaven. For does not the Saviour tell us "the kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Which is the least

indeed of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof?"

So many of our youth, after they have left the Catholic school, do not develop the life of their soul upwards towards God. From their early Christian instruction they bring with them into the struggle of life a few hazy notions about their obligations towards God and their duties as members of Christ's Church. But there is no strength, there is no development of thews during the years of adolescence in preparation for the spiritual combat which they must wage in order to remain faithful soldiers of the Lord Christ.

Now why this sad lack of spiritual strength and preparedness for the dark hour of conflict and temptation? One reason lies in the fact that the minds of these young people have been nurtured on the foolish principles taught by a world whose watchword is "get along." But this means merely a getting along in a material way. It means an accumulation of gold, the attainment of some empty honor, the arriving at social eminence. Their program is limited to money getting and to the secur-

ing of a competence. All else is considered secondary. And so gradually all the sturdy Christian principles implanted in earlier life, and all the teachings familiar to them in school days, are one by one cast overboard as useless ballast. The youth thinks that he has become emancipated.

Some there are who by holding fast to these worldly maxims may advance in worldly ways and "make their mark" in society. But how lone and desolate the interior life of their souls! They have not laid up power and resistance against the day of desolation. They have builded themselves costly mansions and adorned them with precious ornaments which dazzle the eye, they are admiringly spoken of by their fellowmen. But yet they are to be pitied since they have accumulated none of those treasures which pass not away, and which the rust and the moth do not consume.

It behooves all of us not to neglect the life of the soul while we are fighting the battle of life and marching towards the grave through life's fitful fever. There is one beautiful and shining example proposed to all men, teaching them that while they are concerned with the things of Mammon they should not risk the interests of their precious souls.

This example is given us by the Christ-child Himself, Who after He was found in the temple, went down to Nazareth, and there increased in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men. Here we have a model of soul culture. By increasing in this way, Christ wrought the greatest work ever undertaken by man—the redemption of the world. Can we not, therefore, highly resolve that while reaching out for things that pass away we starve not, nor jeopardize the interests of the immortal soul?

53. “A HOLY AND WHOLESOME THOUGHT”

There is hardly one of us who does not cherish the memory of some dear, departed parent, relative or friend. There is scarcely a person who does not occasionally recall the name of one now dead, one dearer beyond dreams and whose voice once was music to their ears.

To those afflicted by the loss of their departed, the Church recalls the sweet doctrine of the Communion of Saints. She reminds them that there is a more potent means than idle tears to show love for those who have answered the last great call and taken their places beside the vast army of

the silent dead. This means is prayer. And "it is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins" (II Mac. XII, 46).

In her genuine interest for the dead, the Church, as in all her ritual, prayers and ceremonies, shows the mother's love towards all her children. There is one great exception to the proverb: "Out of sight, out of mind." The memory of our dead is kept alive by the frequent exhortations of the ministers of the Church to "remember the faithful departed," by our special Requiem Masses, by our pious confraternities who pray specially for the dead, and by certain religious congregations who offer almost all their good works and sacrifices for the souls in Purgatory.

That there is a state of purgation called Purgatory, we know from the Old Testament, where we read that in the wars of the Maccabees many of the followers of Judas, the leader of the Jews, were slain. Under their coats were found some of the idols "which the law forbiddeth to the Jews." It was sinful to have preserved these superstitious objects. But Judas, their captain, "making a gathering, sent 12,000 drachms of silver to Jerusalem

for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection." Judas and his people evidently believed in an intermediate state of punishment, otherwise they would not have made the great offering for the dead.

Prayer for the dead may have a wholesome effect upon ourselves. We are reminded, that in a few years perhaps, we too shall have been gathered to them who are no more. For on some morning the sun will shine, but its rays will no longer brighten our path. For we shall have been taken out to our last resting place. And the thought of death is always beneficial and salutary in a world where much tempts us to forget God and our soul's salvation.

54. "BUT OUR CONVERSATION IS IN HEAVEN"

The Epistles of St. Paul are full of practical advice for the every-day life of Christians. It would be a mistake to suppose that the letters which he addressed to the early Christian churches had a meaning and message only for their respective members. His letters contain a message of universal appeal. They apply to Christians of all ages;

for the spiritual needs and the spiritual trials of members of the Church militant are practically the same throughout the centuries of the Church's existence.

All this is especially true in the case of those practical directions which he gave to the brethren concerning their conduct in the midst of a vicious and sinful world. The evils that beset the Church of Ephesus and of Corinth, the evils that threatened the religious life of the Colossians and the Thessalonians, are still rampant to-day. We too must fight against the insidious dangers which beset all followers of the Crucified. In Paul's wonderful Epistle to the Philippians we find some of these dangers specified. In the third chapter of this letter, from which the above quotation is taken, Paul warns the brethren against false teachers. He tells them that he counts all earthly things loss in order that he may gain Christ. And after detailing the wretched lives of those who are enemies of the Cross of Christ, "whose end is destruction; who mind earthly things," he breaks out into this inspired remark: "But our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ."

This sentence is all the more fraught with meaning when we remember that the word conversation does not merely mean an interchange of words, but rather the manner of conducting ourselves before the world, and refers to the complexus of our social relations. Hence sound critics tell preachers to be guarded and careful lest they apply this text of St. Paul to "pious conversations." The text means that a Christian should remember that his entire life — his thoughts, words and aspirations, his desires and his heart's desires, are to be fixed in heaven. He should recall that as a child of the Church and a member of the flock of Christ, his dignity is not to be measured by the fleeting things of sense and time. For, to use the words of the same Apostle, he is "bought with a price." And this price is none other than the Blood of the Lamb.

What a practical maxim for us to bear in mind in the hurry and stress and turmoil of every-day life! "But our conversation is in heaven." Even if we limit the application of the words to the works of the tongue, what a splendid message the text contains. Alas! how often the "conversation" of Catholics, of members of the Church of Christ, is not in heaven. On the streets, on the highways, and

byways, in the shop, the office and the factory, at work and at amusements, conversation drifts to things which "ought not to be mentioned among Christians."

A stream of blasphemy, a vile mass of smutty insinuation and of jokes of double meaning pour forth from the lips of Christians, who have been bought with a great price.

How vividly St. Paul, in the same chapter to the Philippians, describes the wretched ending of those who persist in vicious conduct of this kind. He says of them: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping), that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ; whose end is destruction; whose God is their belly; and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things."

At all times, Christians who are exposed to the dangers just mentioned,—the dangers resulting to their immortal souls from foul speech and blasphemous tongues, may well hold fast to the inspiring remark of St. Paul: "Our conversation is in heaven." How despicable, and how cowardly, too, to cast our lot with those whose conduct and conversation will ultimately lead them down to shameful destruction! Evil conversation corrupts good man-

ners. Nasty jokes and filthy songs debase minds, poison hearts and ruin immortal souls. Let us remember the words of the great St. Paul. Let us be mindful of the advice of Saint Leo: "Remember, O Christian, thy dignity." Let us remember that though we are in the world, we are not to be of it. For as Christians, "our conversation is in heaven."

55. ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI — THE APOSTLE OF BROTHERLY LOVE

He assuredly deserves well of his fellowmen in these stressful times, who can bring into their hearts a little of that peace which the Divine Master bequeathed to all His children. But alas! in spite of the many agencies for multiplying material comforts, in spite of the manifold discoveries in applied arts and industry, there is so little genuine peace of mind, and so little contentment among men.

There is, on the contrary, a great restlessness, a vague ambition, a striving and clamoring for empty things, whose possession, however, will not bring the long desired happiness. The modern dramas and works of fiction frequently take as their theme this wave of discontent that has swept over large sections of society. The solution proposed by the

writers for these evils, is seldom convincing. In fact, the so-called heroes and heroines who parade through these novels and dramas, often plainly indicate that their sordid adventures have added to their misery and heartache. As a critic of one of these novels writes in the *New York Times Review of Books* (October 10, 1915): "The final impression of the (Theodore Dreiser's) novel is that nothing in this world is worth while." It is plain that we cannot learn from characters of this type, where the secret of real happiness is to be found.

And yet there have been exceptionally happy men and women in this world, whose very presence diffused joy and sunshine. They always looked to the good of the brotherhood, not to their own selfish advantage. The gentle and amiable St. Francis of Assisi was such a lover of his kind and such a welfare worker among men. A non-Catholic scholar thinks that he was the happiest man that ever lived. And the recorded sayings and little sermons of the Saint would imply that such, indeed, is the truth. We can hardly imagine the Saint of Assisi being at cross purposes with any living creature, still less with a fellowman. The

source of his genuine happiness and of his charmingly friendly relations with his townspeople was his constant dwelling on the fact that all men are brothers and that they all form one great community called to the same high inheritance.

Many books have been written on the work of St. Francis and his brethren in the sweet cause of charity and the brotherhood of man. The Poverello, "the poor little man," as he was called, has been admired even by rationalists, who generally refer with ill-disguised contempt to the spirit and activities of the religious orders of men and women in the Catholic Church. Harnack speaks of him as the "most amiable and lovable of monks."

A non-Catholic writer, Professor Wenck, says of the work of St. Francis in the cause of social uplift: "Among all the incentives which the example of St. Francis still presents to our time, the most valuable, no doubt, is that to active charity. Francis' highest glory consist in this — that in his relations towards his neighbors he always wished to be helpful and to serve. By looking upon all creatures as images of their Creator, he felt himself inspired by a sentiment of brotherhood toward all."

Francis of Assisi is preëminently the model for those who dedicate their lives to sweet charity in the service of Christ's poor. What more befitting, even for the modern social worker, than this genuine spirit of love toward all men, which distinguished the heroic character of the Poverello of Assisi? An adequate account of the social and charitable works initiated by him and developed by his religious brethren would require a volume.

It would be worth while to quote a few paragraphs on this point from a work by Father Dubois—"St. Francis of Assisi, Social Reformer." "While the Franciscan movement brought about a social revolution by the restoration of the Christian spirit and the emancipation of the serfs, it had also secondary effects which may not be overlooked. The love of Francis for the poor, the sick, the lepers . . . was practical and efficient."

"Not only he, but all his followers, who were soon counted by thousands, and among whom were many who were noble and rich, gave up all they had to the poor. Not only did they distribute their own fortunes among them, but the product of their labor and the alms which they received also went largely to relieve the misery of the unfortunate.

There is no doubt that, frequently perhaps, this relief was granted to unworthy, designing poor; yet it is evident that this displacement of wealth was on the whole beneficial."

The period of St. Francis had its own peculiar forms of misery and distress. One of them was that dread scourge of Europe in the Middle Ages — leprosy. Now the care of the sick and of the lepers was an obligation of the Friars Minor and was even recommended to members of the Third Order. Among the latter, St. Louis, King of France, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, distinguished themselves in later years in their tenderness towards those stricken with the foul disease. The era of sympathy thus inaugurated by Francis for the leprous brought about greater charity between the different classes of society, and did much to alleviate the wretched lot of the poor and sick of the Middle Ages.

56. "SO LIKE A SHATTERED COLUMN LAY
THE KING "

In Tennyson's "Idyls of the King" there is a picture of the heroic Arthur, King of the Table Round, how, wounded unto death, after "the last

great battle in the West," he lay on the field of slaughter "like a shattered column." He no longer looked like that great Arthur, who "shot through the lists of Camelot, and charged before the eyes of ladies and of kings."

We have in this picture of the stricken king, despoiled of his knightly accoutrements, an image of the sinful soul, smitten down by the foul leprosy of serious sin. Once walking serenely like a child of God and an heir of Heaven, the youth was truly the lord of creation. He participated in the liberty of the children of God. Then in an evil hour sin, dark, ugly, mortal sin, sin which steepes the living soul in spiritual death, came into his life. And now, lo! his former dignity has departed. He is no longer a friend of God. He is like the wilful Prodigal Son of the Gospel story, who had left his father's house and was forced to feed with swine. He has become a useless tree, fit only to be cut down and cast into the fire. He is like a shattered column, bereft of beauty and proportion, a being to be pitied for the evil plight that has laid him low.

And yet that same soul was created in the image of God. St. John Chrysostom rightly says that man by his very stature — upright and erect, differs

from the beast which grovels on the ground. He should not demean himself to the level of the brute world which finds complete satisfaction in the vile things of sense. Hence even man's bodily structure teaches him his superiority over all other created beings and points out his noble destiny. He can find no lasting happiness in groveling among things of sense. He shatters all high ideals that may be expected of him when he becomes the slave to sin. He becomes a shattered column, his soul is made an outcast and is degraded into a useless drudge.

The sinner, thus despoiled of the beauty and strength of sanctifying grace, is blind to his shameful condition. He does not always recognize how low he has fallen, how he has been smitten to the ground. For it is the soul that is wounded, it is an invisible, infinite God who is offended. If for every theft the hand were stricken with palsy, if for every fraud the mind were to become deranged, if for every blasphemy, curse and filthy word, the tongue were to be smitten with corruption; if for every sin of uncleanness, the body were to become covered with ulcers and leprosy,—then the sinner might understand in some degree the heinousness of sin. But the sinner lives on in his crime and wretched

state and knows not the foulness of his soul. If only that soul ulcered, black and tainted, could be revealed to his stricken gaze, he would recoil in horror from his own self. He would understand that it is a grievous injury to have offended the Lord God. He might understand that he is like the shattered column, once admired, but now trampled upon by the multitude.

Let us not then besmirch our high dignity by sin which brings us down to the level of the brute creation. Let us heed the warning of the Psalmist: "Man when he was in honor did not understand; he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them." For to seek joy and satisfaction in the pleasures, delights, comforts and glittering vanities of earth is to lower and debase one's dignity as a child of God.

57. "THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY"

In Chapter 13 of St. Matthew's Gospel we read the telling parable of the King, "who would take an account of his servants." The solemn warning conveyed by that oft-told story is that forgiveness will not be extended by the heavenly Father to those that will not forgive others.

This parable, therefore, contains a lesson which is very practical and which may be frequently applied. It is one of those admirable Gospel narratives, which we ought frequently to recall. The story bears all the marks of a great piece of literature. It is of universal and permanent interest. It shall never lose its value as long as human society remains what it is, as long as we must have social and business dealings with our fellowmen.

How often are we not in the position of the poor servant of the Gospel? We too owe debts, debts of gratitude to God, to our parents and friends, and to our fellowmen. But the narrative of our Lord applies to us even if we owe nothing to our fellowmen. For we are all debtors to God on account of sin and on account of the great mercy He has shown us in forgiving us this debt. Here we find a second great lesson in this parable, that is to say, in the fact that we are debtors to Almighty God in a much truer sense than was the servant of this Gospel, indebted to the king for the sum of ten thousand talents.

Every time that a soul becomes guilty of serious sin, a tremendous debt is contracted towards Almighty God. How can the guilty person by his own

power and resources ever remove this tremendous indebtedness? Of himself he can do nothing. He needs the grace of God to begin his conversion, which is the first step in the paying off of the terrible bond which he contracted by the commission of mortal sin. Our Divine Lord in His goodness has instituted the sacrament of Penance for the benefit of the sin-laden soul. This sacrament, worthily received, helps the Christian, struggling under the weight of sin, to cancel the enormous obligation which he has incurred.

Now the fact that our Divine Lord extends pardon so graciously and so readily to the sinful soul should teach us that we, in turn, must be ever ready to forgive those who trespass against us. This, as we have already said, is a solemn warning conveyed by the parable.

How utterly at variance, then, with the will of our Divine Lord, are those Christians who strive to practice many virtues, yet who, at the same time, bear grudge and spite and ill-will towards their neighbor! How can they really hope for forgiveness, if they continue to nurse these harsh and unfriendly feelings? Let them recall the awful lot of the servant who would not forgive his fellowman.

We are taught in the parable that one of the main conditions of receiving forgiveness is that we, in turn, must forgive our fellowman.

A prolonged state of enmity and of deliberate ill-feeling towards a brother deprives the soul of many precious graces. It certainly makes our holy Communion less fruitful. It may lead to blindness in spiritual things. It may prepare the entrance for other vices into the soul. Has not our Divine Lord Himself said at the end of this parable, when He spoke of the torturers to whom the wicked servant had been delivered: "So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your heart?"

Persons who harbor thoughts of deep resentment and cherish sentiments of anger and revenge against others, often try to find vain excuses for such un-Christian conduct. But often there is little or no cause at all for such a vindictive attitude. The cause may have been altogether imaginary, or, at least, the origin of the grievance was something trifling and unworthy of further notice. Why then keep on brooding over imaginary wrongs? Let us lift up our eyes from our own little selves, our supposedly great wrongs, to our common Saviour and

Lord. Let us give heed to the impressive warning of the parable. Let us remember that the practice of many virtues, without real love of our neighbor in our hearts, avails nothing. For does not St. Paul say in his Epistle to the Corinthians (I Cor. 13, 13): "And now there remain faith, hope and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity."

58. GOD AND NATURE

Great Saints like Francis of Assisi and Ignatius Loyola, profound scholars like Newton and Copernicus, found contemplation of nature an incentive to the love and praise of God. It is said of the scientist Ampère, known for his researches in electro-dynamics, that often while in conversation with his brilliant friend Ozanam, he would exclaim: "How great is God! how great is God!"

It is just and proper that we should rise from a contemplation of the beauties of nature to thoughts of the might and power of Him, Who called all things into existence. The Christian attitude towards nature should be more uplifting than that of the pagans of antiquity and of recent times. Homer and Virgil are full of allusions to the beauty

of nature, and their descriptions derive a wonderful charm from pictures of sea and mountain and smiling landscape. But it is literary beauty only that nature lends to their works. When we come to the great poets of the Christian era — to Lactantius and Ambrose and Prudentius, we find a new and inspiring note — nature is regarded as a stepping-stone to higher things, and to sublime speculations on the beauty of God in the City Celestial.

Christ teaches us how to approach nature and to learn from her the secrets of God's love and providence for His children. If other religious teachers sought the city and the market place, the Man of Galilee sought the sea-side and the mountain and the grove of Gethsemane. He spoke of the birds of the field and the lilies of the valley. He found simple joy in watching the silver mists creeping over the meadows of Galilee and the snow falling upon Hermon. From nature he drew some of His most beautiful teachings concerning the Kingdom of God. Christ's attitude toward external nature should also be ours. The poet Bryant has well said:

“To him who in the love of nature holds communion

With her visible forms, she speaks a various language.”

The beauty of the verdant valley as well as the terror of the stormy sea, the sun-crowned mountain top and the yawning abyss all alike bespeak the power and grandeur of the Creator. He has called all things out of nothing for our good. Theologians use an argument from “Design,” that is, the harmony of nature in the Universe, as a proof of the existence of an all-wise Creator.

The glories of nature which are spread lavishly round about us, should not only be to us a cause of sincere joy. They should likewise lift up our hearts to the unseen God who directs nature to her appointed end, and who gives us in the work of His hand so evident a proof of His wisdom and power.

59. THE SAINTS AND DEMOCRACY

Literature during the last half century has been largely characterized by the “Social Idea.” It has been tinged with the spirit of democracy. Poems have recited the joys and sorrows, the hopes and

aspirations of the "ordinary man," while works of fiction have dealt with those hard facts of life around which revolves the lot of the laboring man and of the humbler members of society.

Destined to guide man to a supernatural end, the Church calmly pursues this spiritual work for rich and poor, for saint and sinner, for those in power and those in subjection. Clashes between capital and labor concern her only when the moral aspect of the controversy is concerned, or when the spiritual welfare of those concerned is in jeopardy. But yet she adapts herself in a certain way, and as much as is consistent with her main purpose, to changing conditions. She may, and in fact, she does alter her tactics and her methods of gaining souls for the kingdom of Christ. For the work of God, as Father Faber happily says, "must be done anew in every age," nor "must we make light of the difference of ages."

And what message has the Church in these days of the changing order and in this era of "the new democracy"? She still preaches, and perhaps more insistently than ever, the great truth of the brotherhood of man, that all men without exception are creatures of God and that all are equal, that the

only privilege worth esteeming is that of fellowship with Christ in His kingdom. She teaches that all — rich and poor, high and low — are children of God and called to be members of the Church triumphant in Heaven. Now this is the spirit of genuine democracy, it is a teaching which will do much to smooth out the inequalities springing from difference of earthly fortune and of worldly prestige.

It is in her saints that the Church gives one of the best and strongest proofs of her devotion to the great principle of equal human rights for all. We have not yet heard of a saint who attained to holiness by pride, by over-bearing conduct, by spurning the God-given rights of the little ones or of the humblest toiler, by tyranny or by lust of power. The Apostles rose to their sublime office of spiritual guides of the early Christian communities from "the ranks" of the people. For with the exception of Matthew and Bartholomew, they were in all probability, fishermen or laborers.

The great missionaries of the Church often began their work by preaching to the proud potentates of foreign lands the great principle of equal rights for all men, and dared to tell them that there is no

authority but that which cometh of God. They did much to uplift womanhood and to alleviate the wretched lot of the slave and of the prisoner of war.

Francis Xavier, though of noble lineage, gave up all earthly prospects in order to live and to die for the cause of his Master among a strange people. Peter Claver became the servant of slaves in Cartagena. Brébeuf and Lallemant and the other pioneer missionaries of Northern America sometimes scoured the forest for food for the sick and abandoned savages, and ministered to the comfort of the children of the wilds. Bishop Marty, who labored long among the Sioux of North Dakota, lived, as far as regards material comforts, the life of those whom he had come to evangelize.

The saints and the missionaries have done much to break down the harsh barriers between wealth and poverty. In India their cry was: "We must abolish as much as we can the abominable system of caste." The pioneers of the gospel lived contentedly in the wigwam of the Redskin, in the hut of the Fellah, and in the kraal of the Zulu.

When in the great cities of our land there is a migration of the well-to-do away from grime and dust, and the clangor of toil and the roar of

machinery, to the "fashionable section," the Church of Christ does not abandon the poor and the day-laborer. She stays in the midst of those who pass laborious days in the factories and foundries of the city. But others of the so-called Christian churches, in spite of the glowing tribute paid by their ministers to the "age of democracy," follow the movement of the wealthier parishioners. When in the heat of summer the preachers of certain churches seek out the sea-shore and the mountain-side, and temporarily "close up" the meeting-house, the priest, true to his sacred trust, stays with his people, and tells them ever again the sweet story of the rood, and assembles his people for common worship in the house of God.

60. TWO TYPES OF HEROES

Hero-worship is not at all as uncommon and as unusual in democratic America as some are inclined to believe. We pride ourselves on our spirit of independence and on our standards for estimating an individual's value to society. And yet, as much as any other people, are we led astray by the glitter of sham excellence, and we readily join in singing the praises of persons whose achievements and

whose work do not always make for the lasting good of society. In other words, many of us are hero-worshippers and our reasons for extolling the lives of our favorites and joining in the jubilant applause that celebrates their deeds, will not bear a close scrutiny.

Frequently it is the newspaper, or the shallow magazine or some popular, perambulating lecturer that is responsible for the upgrowth of a foolish or sentimental, and often, very unreasonable hero-worship among the people. These agencies of publicity control public opinion to a large extent, and it is easy for them to inaugurate a campaign in favor of some man or woman whose exploits are described, discussed, illustrated, defended and compared with those of the great characters of history, until a befuddled public really imagines that heroes and heroines great and mighty have arisen among them. Even the stage has its heroes and this powerful factor for the making of public opinion is not a little responsible for the false hero-worship that beclouds the judgment of otherwise sane and sensible persons.

Unfortunately the standards employed by the press, the popular magazine, the wandering lecturer

and the playwright, in presenting the lives and achievements of real or imaginary heroes, are not those that will recommend themselves to men and women who can judge character at its true worth. In fact, the standards used are often vicious and one-sided. For who are some of the heroes extolled in the press, praised in the magazines, celebrated by the lecturer or applauded in the theater? Frequently they are persons whose greatest merit is that they have "made good" merely from a worldly point of view. They have amassed millions, they have succeeded after long years and many strange adventures in wreaking vengeance upon an enemy, they have, perhaps with crooked means, gained some coveted honor or social distinction, they have performed some feat of fool-hardy bravery, they have after much travail of spirit turned out a neat epigram or launched forth a volume attacking "conventional morality"—and, henceforth, they are heroes. They will now for a long time enjoy popular approval. The daily paper and the cheap monthly and the demagogue will do the rest—will see to it that the favored ones receive their due meed of advertisement and applause.

It is unnecessary to point out many instances to

prove that in some such way are our heroes manufactured to-day. Some years ago a man, an eminent politician, the chief magistrate of our greatest city, died on mid-ocean. He had intended to go abroad to recuperate after the strenuous work of a long and bitter campaign. He had won the election. The papers said he had already formed great plans for the city's improvement in every way. All he needed was a little rest. But he died, as we have said, after scoring a triumph. The papers of the metropolis devoted columns to his life and "achievements." A publishing concern put forth a "Selection of his letters and speeches." The school children were led in procession to his bier in the city-hall where the body lay in state. There was no end of obituaries and of memorial services. That man is now completely forgotten. It is hard to find his name in the New York papers. But for the time being he was evidently considered a great American "hero." His praises were sung everywhere and his life was held up to the youth of the land as that of an eminently successful citizen. He *was* successful. But not if you gauge success by standards of permanent worth and stability. There is no intention here to judge the man. If the main

traits of his life and character were not so well known, the example would not be cited here. But the point is that this man was not a hero in the true sense of the word though the public press and the sensational journals were filled with the story of his life's ambitions and attainments.

The moneyed man — what a power and what a hero he is in the opinion of some people! He founds libraries and endows universities, establishes palaces of peace and gives pensions to retiring university professors. All of which may be very good. But the man who does these things is not thereby a hero. He does not deserve a tithe of the encomium that has been showered upon him nor is it proper and just that public buildings and institutions transmit his name to future generations. For the ambitions and the very successes of that man may not be the best example to place before the youth of the land. Such a man is not necessarily the most useful citizen, nor do his achievements in the conquest of wealth bequeath the best and highest ideals to the coming generation.

All this means that there are other heroes and other standards of heroism. Fortunately many people of the thinking class will admit that the

"making good" from a mere worldly point of view, is not the sole standard of success and does not of itself entitle to enrolment among the world's band of heroes. We have heroes and heroines who during their toilsome, humble lives were scarcely known beyond the narrow neighborhood where they worked out their beautiful lives. We have them in the ranks of the poor and the rich, the great and the lowly, the highly cultured and the unlearned.

Ludwig Windthorst, devoting the best years of his strenuous life to the defense of the great principles of religious liberty and of social justice, Windthorst braving the powerful Chancellor of a mighty empire — Windthorst was a true hero. The ideals bequeathed by him to future generations are of the highest type. He sought not worldly advancement or great riches or a name among the famous statesmen. He wished to do good. He wanted to serve his God and his fellowman and his country. He did it through long years of bitter opposition. Such a man is "a hero in the strife." Windthorst was a hero of another type than the one just described.

The saints were true heroes of this other class. Their deeds and lives and virtues are still an in-

spiration to the men and women of to-day. Society would be all the happier were many to tread in the footsteps of those who arrived at sainthood, who remained friends of God because they loved and served mankind. We may not perhaps be able to imitate them in their particular virtues, but they remain an inspiring example. St. Vincent de Paul, going about the streets of the fever-smitten city and picking up the abandoned children, bringing them to Christian homes — what an admirable example of social service for our day which sorely needs this genuine charity and love for the poor! We may perhaps have to revise our notions of hero-worship and of heroism, and see whether our models are those of a foolish and frivolous world, which reckons success by vain and empty standards, or whether they be those presented to us by the Church of Christ, one of whose sweet privileges it is to invite us to contemplate the lives and virtues of those who wrought great deeds for God and men and whose memory will ever be held in benediction.

61. METEOR-LIKE THEY VANISH

During her progress through the centuries the Church has been combated by enemies from within

and from without. The former were the heretics like Pelagius, Zwingli and Calvin; the latter, chiefly the potentates and rulers who opposed to her spiritual weapons the might and power of their legions.

Yet history bears witness that the triumph of these enemies arrayed against the Teacher of Truth has been short-lived. They vanished like meteors. For a while they may have shone brilliantly. Perhaps they dazzled men by their power and by specious arguments hurled against the Church founded on the Rock. They may have caused the faint-hearted and those of weak faith to tremble lest the pillar of truth be shaken in its foundation. Yet now these enemies are no more. Their work has almost passed away. Their names are no longer in the mouths of the multitude.

A few years ago certain enthusiasts in this country celebrated the five-hundredth anniversary of the death of a so-called Reformer. It was John Huss of Bohemia, who was executed for heresy in 1415. He had stirred up the people by pernicious teachings. He had affirmed that "the church is the congregation of the predestined;" that "priests must preach the word of God regardless of the cen-

sure of the Church." These were only two of his false doctrines. Like Wyclif he appealed to the mob and incited them to persecute priests and monks. The Council of Constance ordered the "reformer" to be seized, and proceeded with him according to the custom of the time.

These facts were rehearsed and John Huss was praised as a martyr of liberty against "ecclesiastical tyranny." The magazines sounded his praises and books were compiled in his honor. But now he is once more forgotten. His brief triumph was anything but universal. It was prepared and participated in chiefly by those who are always eager to hurl a dart against Rome.

The earlier heretics and disseminators of false doctrines are almost completely forgotten. Many persons could hardly tell what is meant by the heresies of the Monophysites, the Monothelites, or of the Nestorians. These false teachings and their authors have passed away, while the Church which they attacked "goes on forever."

"Magna est veritas, et praevalet"—"Truth is great, and it prevails." This is seldom verified so clearly as when the wreckage of a past heresy is momentarily brought to the surface, as was done

at the afore-mentioned anniversary. It is sad to view the remnants of these shattered systems and equally sad to recall the fate of their defenders, who once basked in the smiles of the multitude and perhaps enjoyed the temporary favor of those in the seats of the mighty. Teachers of falsehood come and go, kings and rulers, drunk with the rage of thwarted passion, raise impotent hands against the upholders of Christ's law and sow dissension in the very sanctuary of the Church, yet these onslaughts finally fall back upon those directing them. For the Church is founded on a Rock and she will survive the storms and heresies of centuries. Nothing is more interesting than to watch the Bark of Peter going down the centuries, battered and beaten by the cunning weapons expressly forged against her, yet safely surviving amid furious attacks which would long ago have shattered an institution not supported by the power of God.

62. ACCEPTING HARD TRUTHS

It is sometimes said by those hostile to our Faith and by those who do not understand it sufficiently, that Catholics must believe hard and unpalatable truths. They must accept the distinction between

venial and mortal sin, it is asserted, and they must likewise believe that unforgiven mortal sin will be punished by hell-fire. Now these are truths which the unbelieving modern world refuses to accept. It finds them outworn and useless in an "age of enlightenment."

But are these truths really so harsh and so unreasonable as to merit rejection by the thinking mind? Some time ago a number of eminent business and professional men of St. Louis spent three days in going through the exercises of a "Retreat." Their chief duty was meditation on those truths which unbelievers, and those whose faith is weak, find forbidding and unpalatable. Yet one and all these men found reflection on the hard truths proposed to them in the Retreat very satisfactory and very much worth while. They failed to see why the Catholic teaching on sin and its dread punishment in a future life should be called unreasonable. In fact, they said that this truth when calmly considered, strikes one as very just, very sound, very logical. So beneficial was their meditation of these verities to their souls, that the participants in the Retreat said that they would return the following year to spend three days in the same way.

This is the experience of all persons who have pondered these truths in a calm and dispassionate state of mind. They are not ashamed to make them the guide and rule of their lives. They have considered them with reason, enlightened by faith. They do not find them inconsistent with the teachings of sound philosophy. The truths possess, in fact, an element of grandeur and solidity which is highly comforting in an age which seeks to destroy and break away from all revealed teaching.

63. THE PUBLIC LIFE OF CHRIST

By the public or active life of our Divine Lord we mean the last three years of His blessed career on earth which He devoted to works of mercy, to the preaching of His doctrine and to the foundation and perfecting of the Church. One of the striking features of this active life is its brevity when compared with the thirty years He spent in the obscurity of Nazareth. And yet the saints have found those three years of His apostolic career a wonderful subject for meditation and inspiration. Innumerable books have been written on that portion of our Lord's sojourn among men.

As it is the principal work of every sincere Christian who really has at heart the salvation of his soul to imitate his Divine Lord, that public life should often be considered. But how can we approach this vast subject upon which libraries have been written? Where should we begin? Every moment, every word, every act and miracle of the Saviour's public activity means so much for us. The saints and learned spiritual writers teach us how to consider that active life, and how to make it our model through life's weary pilgrimage. We shall find that it is remarkable for three virtues.

That life was in the first place a life of *work*. This is the first lesson it holds out to us. We must all work and be active in some way. Now Christ's chief duty was to do the will of His Father, Who had sent Him into the world. Hence, "He went about doing good," teaching His heavenly doctrine and inviting all men to learn from Him. We know, too, that He was "in labors from His youth." His friends were the poor, and He was often obliged to help them rather than put them to discomfort by allowing them to help Him. He instructed the people at all times and gave Himself little rest, for He was consumed with zeal for the glory of His

Father. He used every occasion of imparting instruction to the people. And teaching the rude, the hard of heart, those who looked only for the restoration of the splendors of ancient Israel, was not an easy task. And how difficult it was to form apostles, and teachers of the Gospel, from the rough material at His command—the twelve fishermen and rude men of worldly interests!

That life was in the second place a life of *prayer*. Often he retired into solitude to pray. For He was dependent on the will of His eternal Father. He had come to do his Father's work. For this He needed the Father's help. He sought it in earnest and persevering prayer. As a result of this frequent prayer, our Lord's active life was one of interior recollection and of union with His eternal Father. He often spent the night in prayer and He prayed to the Father before working some of the most striking miracles.

The active life was in the third place a life of *suffering*. For Christ sought not the comforts of life. His friends had none, or few of the good things of the world, and so could not enrich Him. He said of Himself, that He had not where to lay His head. Worse than this, He suffered from the

opposition, calumnies and persecutions of His enemies. For did they not seek to put Him to death? Again, the people who listened to Him to-day, were ready to stone Him on the morrow.

Now who cannot learn much wisdom and draw help and inspiration from our Lord's conduct during His public career? Is not our's a life of labor? Can we succeed without prayer? Is not suffering and trial and hardship our portion? We may then look upon that model whom we all must imitate — Christ Jesus in His public life. If we do so, we may be certain to follow the path that leads to final victory and to perseverance in the way of God's commandments. For Christ is still the Way, the Truth and the Life: the way that we should walk, the truth we should know, and the life we should imitate.



